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China

CHINA TOURISM

HERITAGE TOUR FROM XI'AN TO BAOJI

A JOURNEY TO TAXKORGAN

DIY EXCURSION IN XIAMEN

265

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- ❖ Enjoy a Beijing opera show in the evening.

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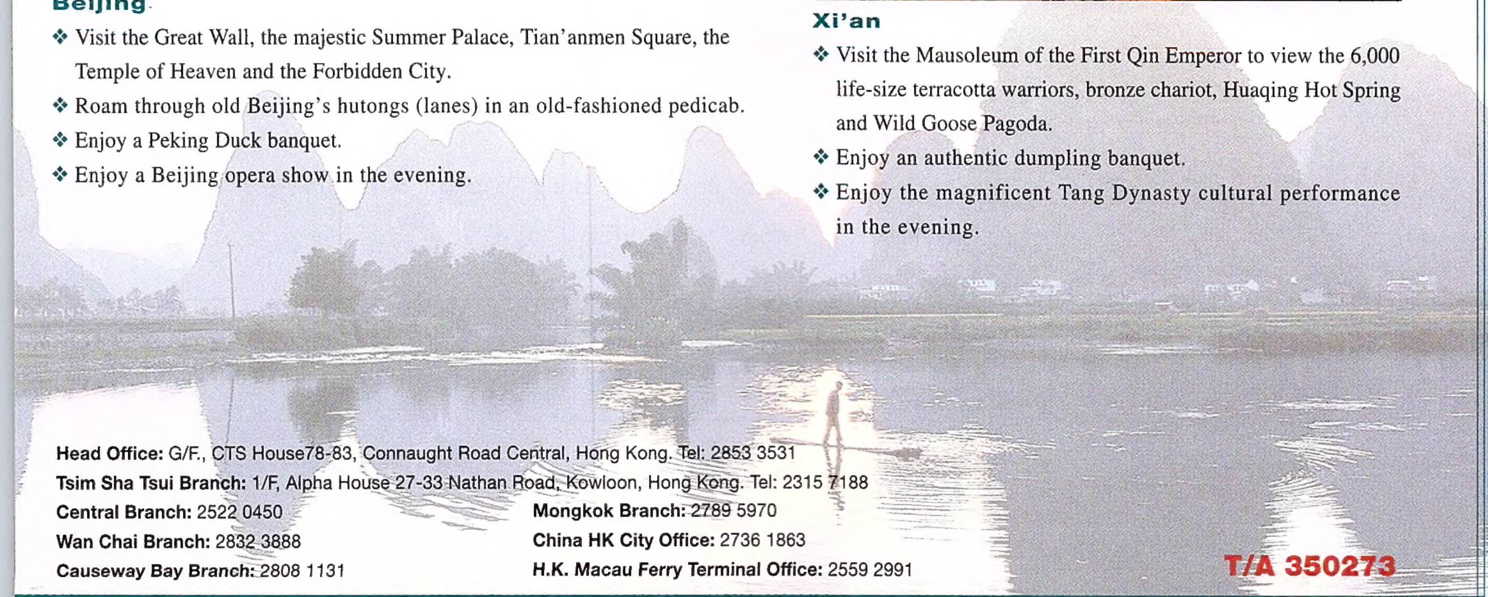
- ❖ Enjoy an authentic dumpling banquet.
- ❖ Enjoy the magnificent Tang Dynasty cultural performance in the evening.



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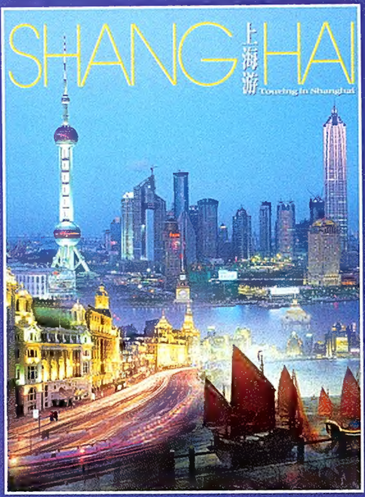
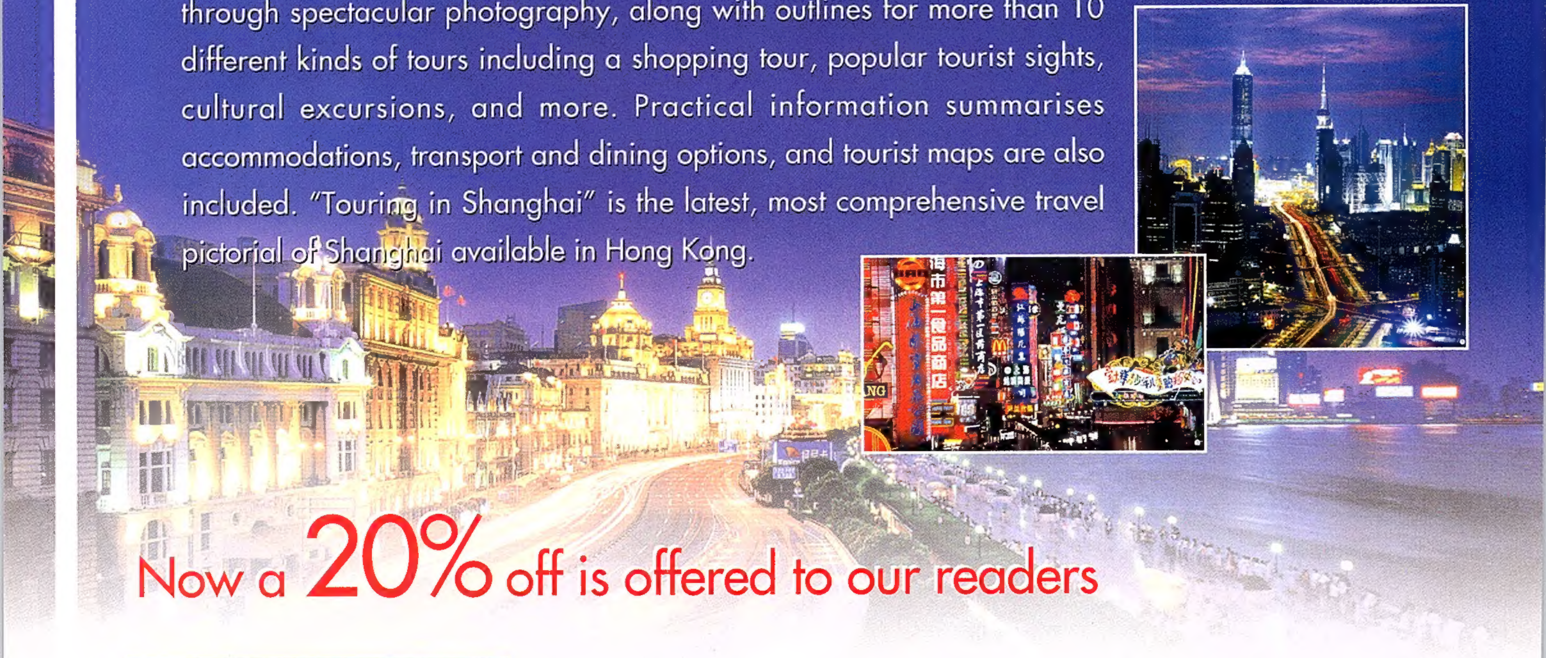


Shanghai has evolved at an unprecedented speed for decades into the biggest commercial city in China and one of the great metropolises of the world. Favourably located at the mouth of the Yangtse River, Shanghai has a long history and a rich culture. Commercial tower blocks and traditional buildings exude their individual charms simultaneously in the Pudong District, where hundreds of buildings in different styles, old or new, are collectively known as the Exposition of World Architecture. A kaleidoscope of entertainments and festivals of Old Shanghai attracts scores of entrepreneurs and travellers alike. "Touring in Shanghai" takes you deeper into this vibrant city through spectacular photography, along with outlines for more than 10 different kinds of tours including a shopping tour, popular tourist sights, cultural excursions, and more. Practical information summarises accommodations, transport and dining options, and tourist maps are also included. "Touring in Shanghai" is the latest, most comprehensive travel pictorial of Shanghai available in Hong Kong.



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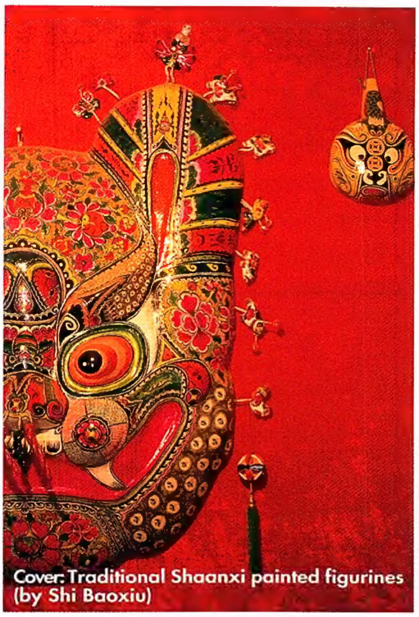

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Called Chang'an in ancient times, Xi'an is one of the oldest capital cities in China and was a capital for the longest period of time. It is regarded as one of the "four great ancient capitals of the world" along with Athens in Greece, Cairo in Egypt and Rome in Italy. No matter how long this city's history is, it continues to change over time. Old streets are no longer, and time honoured pagodas have been replaced by skyscrapers. Xi'an's twin city, Baoji is truly worthy of a visit. A heritage tour here includes a visit to the Mausoleum of Wang Zhaojun, the Famen Temple, Zhouyuan, the Lord Zhou Temple, and the mausoleum of the first ancestor of the Chinese. The relics and heritage sites in these two cities are a wonderful feast for your eyes.

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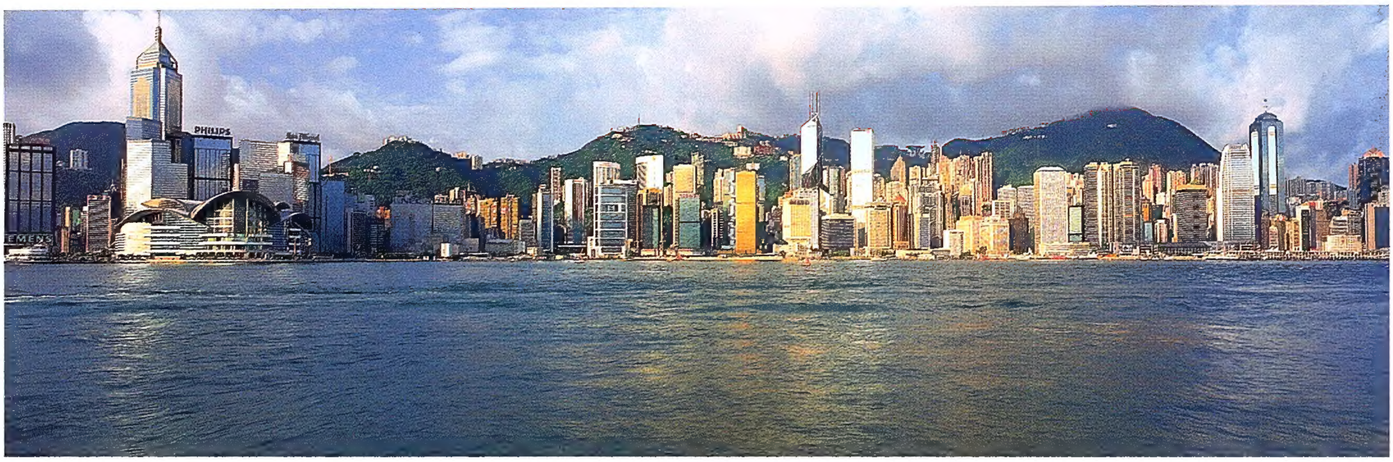

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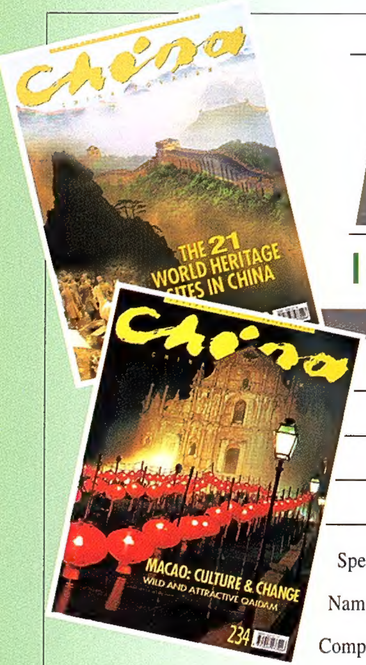
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km-long Taohua (Peach Blossom) River became famous throughout Southeast Asia in the 1930s from a popular song titled "Home of Beautiful Girls Along the Taohua River". With its crystal clear water, wide expanses of fields, and beautiful women, a journey along the Taohua River is fantastic.

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Leaving from Beijing and Lanzhou respectively, the writer and his friend travelled directly to Urümqi, the capital city in West China's Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region. From Urümqi they went to Kashi, then headed for their ultimate destination, the Taxkorgan Tajik Autonomous County. After their first night here, a new day finds them on a journey which enriches their understanding of the hardworking and hospitable Tajik minor nationality.

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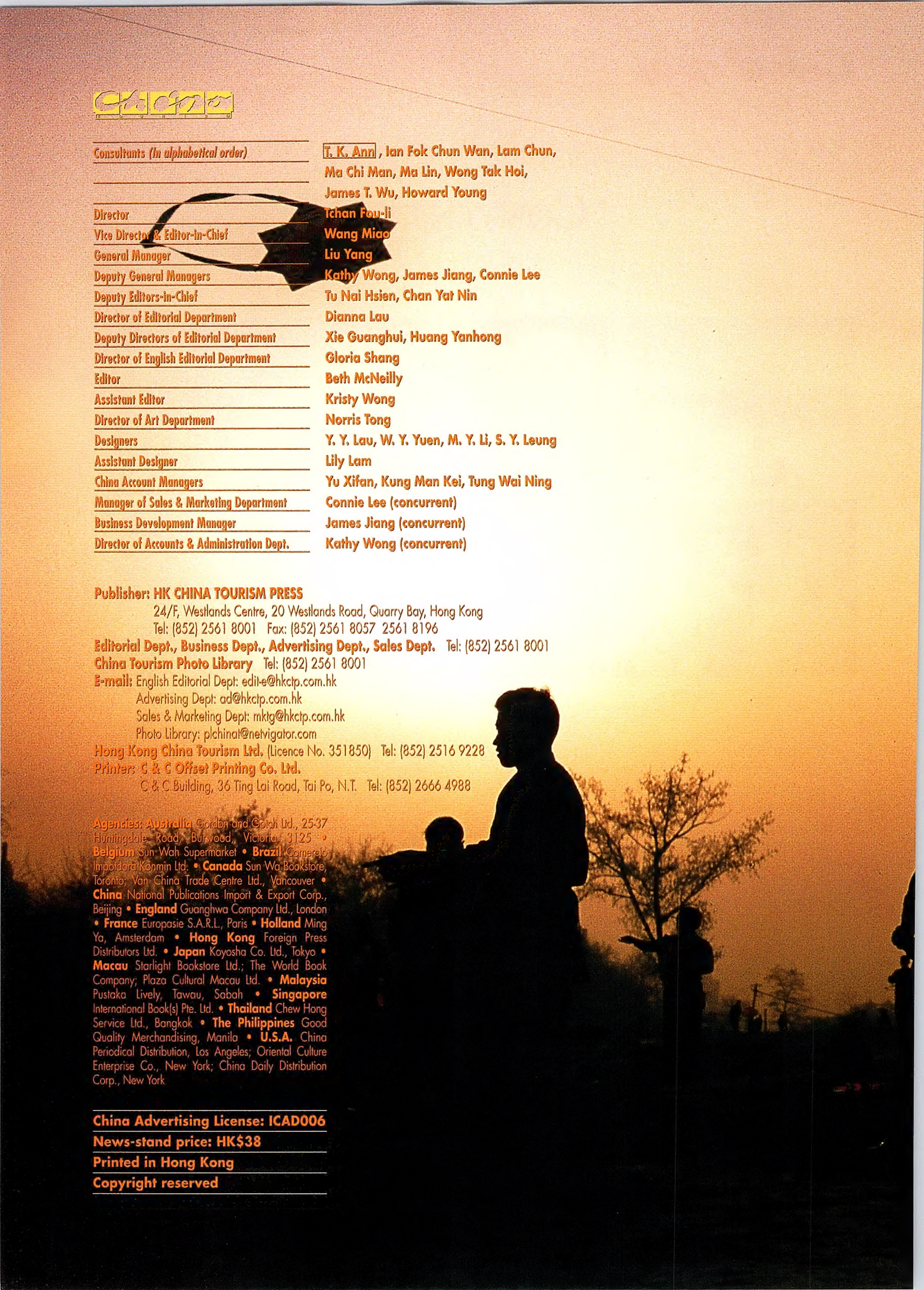

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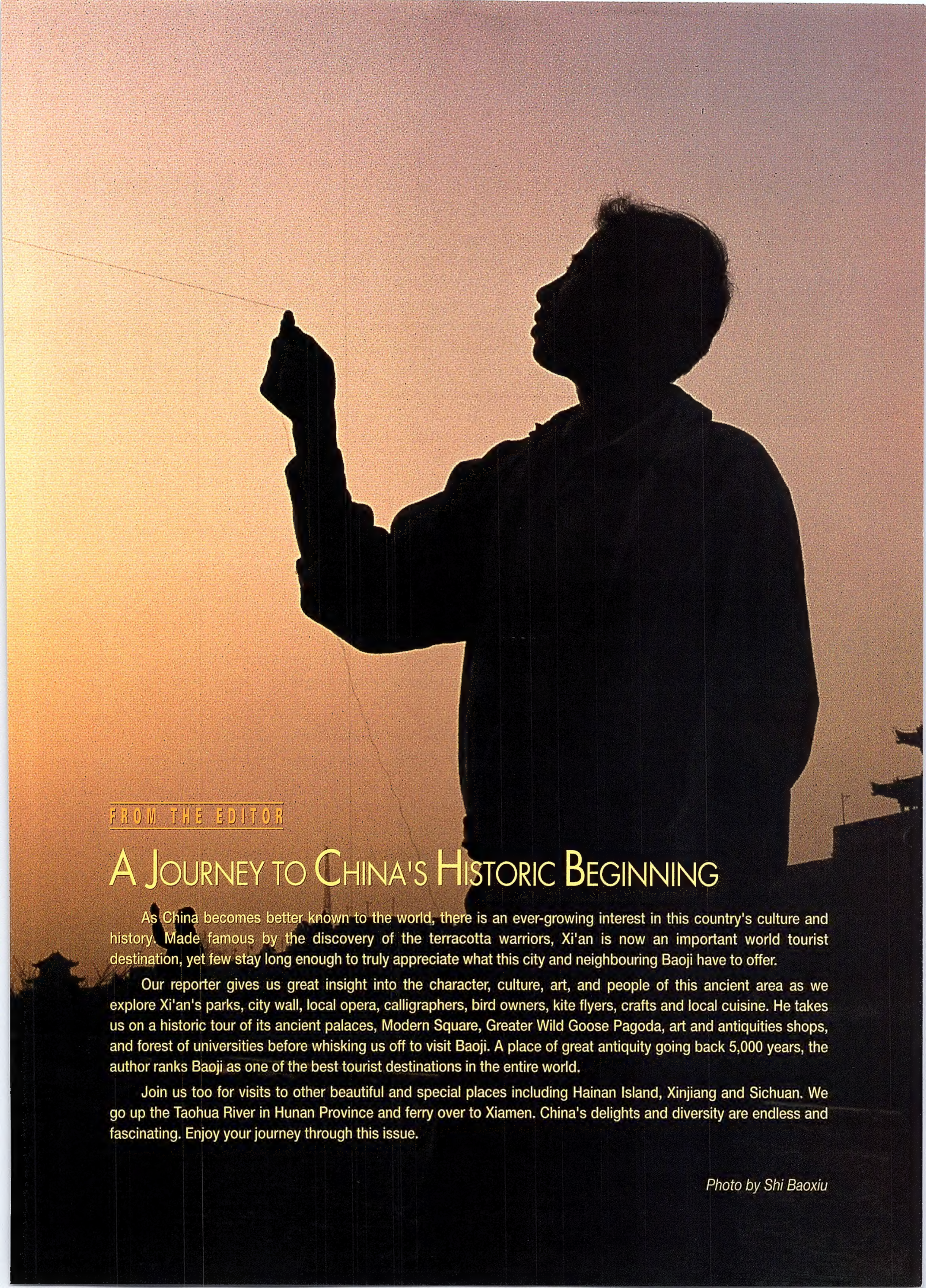


FROM THE EDITOR

A JOURNEY TO CHINA'S HISTORIC BEGINNING

As China becomes better known to the world, there is an ever-growing interest in this country's culture and history. Made famous by the discovery of the terracotta warriors, Xi'an is now an important world tourist destination, yet few stay long enough to truly appreciate what this city and neighbouring Baoji have to offer.

Our reporter gives us great insight into the character, culture, art, and people of this ancient area as we explore Xi'an's parks, city wall, local opera, calligraphers, bird owners, kite flyers, crafts and local cuisine. He takes us on a historic tour of its ancient palaces, Modern Square, Greater Wild Goose Pagoda, art and antiquities shops, and forest of universities before whisking us off to visit Baoji. A place of great antiquity going back 5,000 years, the author ranks Baoji as one of the best tourist destinations in the entire world.

Join us too for visits to other beautiful and special places including Hainan Island, Xinjiang and Sichuan. We go up the Taohua River in Hunan Province and ferry over to Xiamen. China's delights and diversity are endless and fascinating. Enjoy your journey through this issue.

Photo by Shi Baoxiu

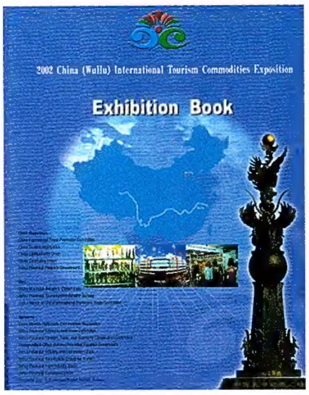
Cathay Pacific to Restore More Services

Hong Kong's dominant airline, Cathay Pacific Airways, plans to expand its services in August in response to increasing market demand. The airline said in a statement that it would restore more services to their operating levels before September 11, 2001, and bring all parked passenger aircraft back into operation.

Starting on August 1, twice-daily service to Los Angeles will resume. Flights to Manila will be back to five per day and the Kuala Lumpur route will return to the original three-times-daily schedule.

All five temporarily parked passenger aircraft and one freighter will also re-enter service in August.

The 2002 China (Wuhu) International Tourism Commodities Exposition


2002 China (Wuhu) International Tourism Commodities Exposition
Exhibition Book

The 2002 China (Wuhu) International Tourism Commodities Exposition will be held from September 25 to 28 in Wuhu.

Located in the Yangtse River Delta, Wuhu's rich cultural heritage has made it an important commercial and tourist city since ancient times. Now it claims four national distinctions: Open City; Wuhu Economic and Technological Development Zone; Open Port; and Outstanding Tourism City of China. Picturesque Wuhu boasts convenient transportation with easy access to famous scenic spots such as Yellow Mountain, Jiuhua Mountain and Taiping Lake. Historical sites include evidence of ancient Eurasian human activity at Renzi Cave and an ancient bronze smelter of Dagong Mount, while the Wuhu Yangtse River Railway and Highway Bridge incorporates some of the greatest technical achievements of the 20th century. The elegant Zhongshan Road Walking Street, the First Street of Anhui Province and Jiuzi Cultural Square form a delightful contrast with beautiful Mirror Lake. Tourist favourites such as Iron Picture art and Shazi watermelon seed are famous throughout China and abroad.

Since 1992, the Anhui Provincial Government and Wuhu Municipal Government have held the tourist commodities exhibition fair every two years, while the annual China (Wuhu) Tourism Commodities Exposition began in 2000. Approximately 2,000 exhibitors from 31 provinces in China and numerous countries worldwide participate in the fair.

The Expo will feature in promoting the trades, production, research and development of China tourism commodities, meeting shopping needs of tourists, and promoting dialogue between tourism experts.

Yunnan Plans to Build Second Largest Hydro-power Station

Southwest China's Yunnan Province aims to build the world's second largest hydro-power station.

The feasibility study for the Xiluodu Hydroelectric Station will be completed in 2003, with construction to begin before 2005.

Located in Rongshan County, the station will have an installed capacity of 1,260 kilowatts allowing it to generate of 57.1 billion kilowatt hours of power annually.

The reservoir, meanwhile, will hold up to 12.7 billion cubic metres, a capacity second only to that of the Three Gorges project.

Gobi City Set to Become China's "Salt Lake City"

Golmud, high upon the Gobi Desert in Nothwest China's Qinghai Province, is on course to emulate Salt Lake City in the United States.

The city government plans to develop a series of core industries involving salt lake chemicals, the petrochemical and gas industry, commerce and trade, and logistics by relying on nature's bounty.

The world's largest city in area, covering 124,500 sq km, Golmud is located in the central-south part of the Qaidam Basin, dubbed a "treasure basin" for its wealth of natural resources.

Of the more than 20 salt lakes around the city, Qarham Salt Lake northeast of Golmud proper boasts an area of 5,856 sq km, making it the biggest inland salt lake in the world and China's largest production base for potassium, magnesium and salt.

Golmud also possesses natural gas reserves of one trillion cubic metres, plus over 50 varieties of minerals like gold, copper, jade and precious stones, lead and zinc.

In addition to a major potassium fertiliser project to be completed by June 2003, the government has given the green light to the creation of an industrial base costing 10.7 billion yuan (US$1.28 billion), to make comprehensive use of the Qaidam Basin's rich resources. The project is expected to evolve into a major production base for aluminium alloy and polyvinyl chloride materials in China.

At the same time, three firms from China's mainland and Taiwan are researching large-scale development of local lithium resources.

Shanghai Enjoys Support in Bidding for World Expo 2010

The Chinese Government and people will join hands with the city of Shanghai to turn the World Expo 2010 into a successful, exciting and unforgettable event. The Chinese economy has been growing rapidly for more than 10 years and is expected to continue to grow in the years to come. The enormous business opportunities in China will increase the dynamics of the World Expo and benefit all participants.

Broad-based public support is key to a successful Expo. With 1.3 billion people behind the bid, the Shanghai Expo will have the highest rate of public support in the world. The growing economy provides strong financial support, stable society assures a good environment and the firm support from the government further guarantees a successful Expo.

Experts estimate the attendance will be 70 million, which would be the largest participation in the history of the World Expo. Besides, the Chinese business community pledges full support and assistance to Shanghai's bid for World Expo 2010. To host World Expo in 2010 will not only promote the economic development of Shanghai and China as a whole, but also offer great opportunities for participating countries and regions to enter the Chinese market. A gallop opinion poll showed that 90 per cent of Chinese people and 93 per cent of Shanghai residents are willing to host the Expo.

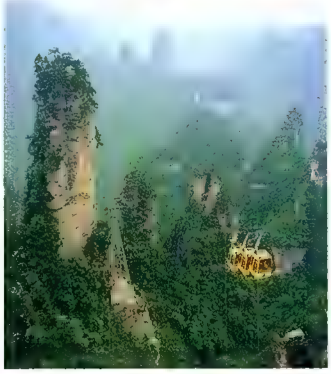
Apart from Shanghai, Moscow, Mexico City, Poland's Wroclow and South Korea's Yeoso have also bid for the World Expo 2010.

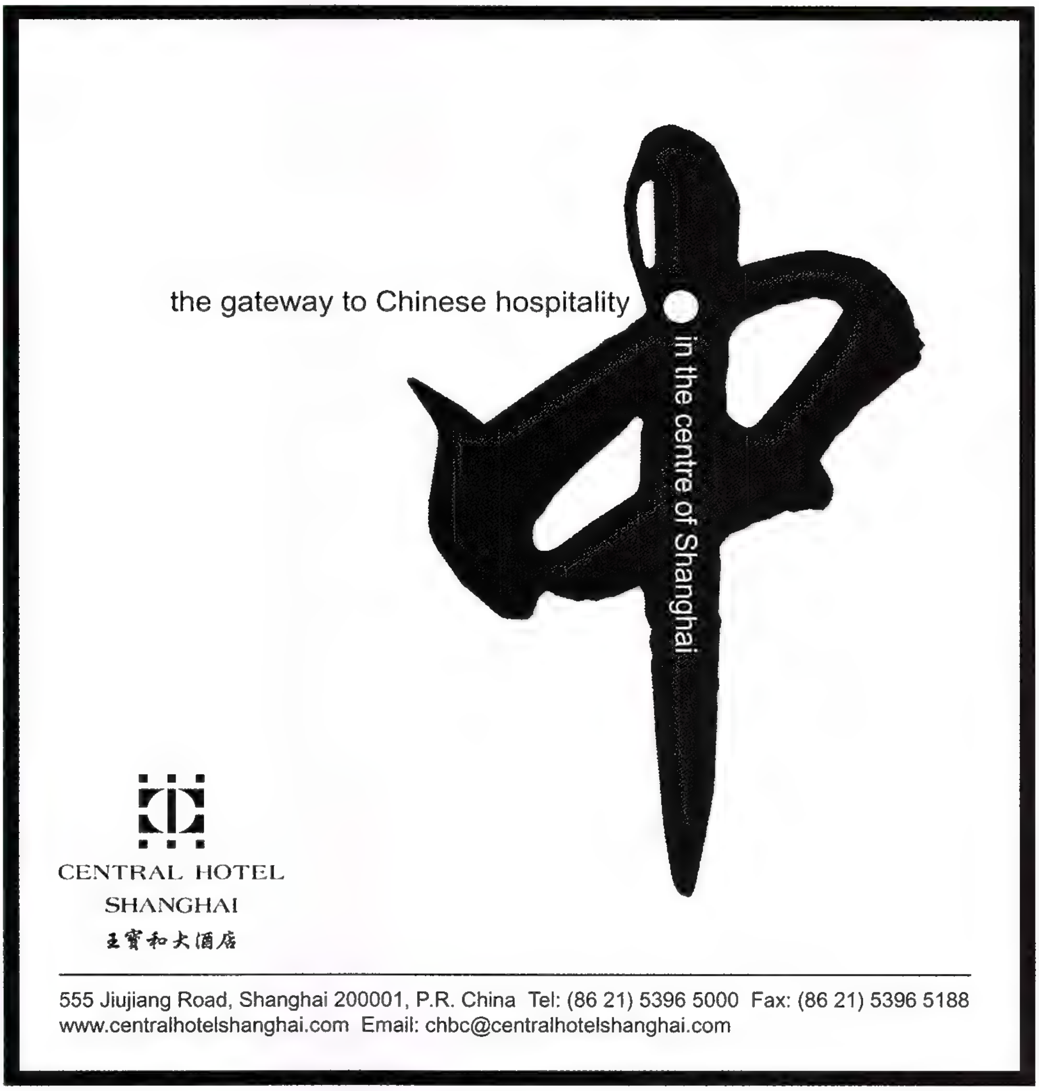
Zhangjiajie to Stop Using Coal

Zhangjiajie, a famous tourist destination in Central China's Hunan Province, plans to stop using coal in three years' time.

Companies or projects reliant on coal to run their operations will be prohibited from doing so and existing coal-burning boilers will be replaced gradually.

Furthermore, the Zhangjiajie municipal government will invest more than 86 million yuan (US$ 10.36 million) to build a town gas and petrol pipeline network for residents.





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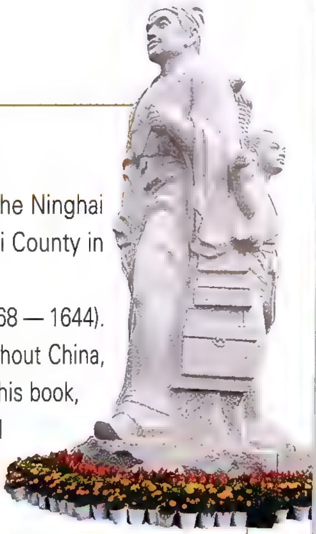

The First Ninghai Xu Xiake Travel Festival

Zhejiang After almost two years of planning, the First Xu Xiake Travel Festival (Ninghai), organised by the Ninghai Municipal Government, Ningbo Tourism Bureau and Ningbo Cultural Bureau, was held on May 19 in Ninghai County in Ningbo City, located in East China's Zhejiang Province.

Born in Jiangsu Province, Xu Xiake (1586 — 1641) was a famous geographer and writer of the Ming Dynasty (1368 — 1644). An enthusiastic learner, he read thousands of books from early childhood. At age 28 he began his travels throughout China, visiting 19 provinces, cities, and autonomous regions. His subsequent experiences were ultimately compiled into his book, *Travels of Xu Xiake*. In this work of over 600,000 words, the introductory remarks reveal, "On the last day of the third lunar month, I set out from the west gate of Ninghai County Seat. The sunlight came out as the clouds disappeared, I felt delighted with the mountains looking radiant....", establishing that Xu started his great journey from Ninghai. After lengthy research, experts agreed that the exact day he left Ninghai was May 19, 1613. Therefore, officials from the government and tourism bureau selected this date for their first Xu Xiake Travel Festival.

Covering an area of 1,931 sq km, Ninghai has a population of 580,000. It is among the first group of port cities approved by the State Council. As a state-level ecological protection demonstrative region, the county boasts 1.7 million *mu* (about 118,000 hectares) of mountainous areas and 420,000 *mu* (about 28,000 hectares) of coastal areas. Ninghai owns plentiful tourist resources, including the Tianhe Ecology Scenic Area, Nanxi Hot Spring Forest Park, Huanshan Islands, Qiantong Ancient Town, and South China Folk Art Museum, etc. Ninghai is also a place where many famous Chinese figures were born, like contemporary Chinese painting master Pan Tianshou, revolutionary hero Rou Shi, Ming-dynasty scholar Fang Xiaoru, and patriotic historian Hu Sansheng. Their former residences in Ninghai are not to be overlooked. The county is also conveniently connected to big cities such as Shanghai and Hangzhou. More information about the Ninghai County can be found in the website: www.cnnhtour.com.

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THE 1ST XU XIAKE TOURIST FESTIVAL (NINGHAI, CHINA)
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Watching Whales in East Taiwan

Taiwan To watch whales in Taiwan, May to October is the best period, while Hualien and East Taiwan are the optimal places for this activity. If going from Hualien, the setting off place will be either Hualien Harbour or Shiti Harbour. From East Taiwan, the departure point is in Chenggong. Each cruise takes about two hours, beginning at seven in the morning and leaving every two to three hours thereafter. Boats can hold from 30-40 or 70-80 people, but even two people can make such a cruise.

When planning a whale watching trip, consider the frequency of sightings and the quality of the boat. If whale sightings are low in an area, even if the cruise is inexpensive and includes other scenic spots, the main purpose of the trip becomes meaningless. Many whale-watching outfits in Taiwan have improved the designs of their boats, such as adding a pair of wings to balance them. Even so, tourists are reminded to ask about the roughness of the water and to take motion sickness pills to prevent dizziness before boarding.

Places like Ilan and Kengding also provide whale-watching tours, but the routes are longer than those in Hualien and East Taiwan and whales are rarely seen there.

Smartcards to Be Used on Ferry

Guangdong Smartcards, which can be used on 218 public bus routes in Guangzhou, has worked on the city's ferry service starting from June 26. Fangcun-Huangsha Ferry is the first route where the smartcards can be used, followed by nine other downtown ferry routes across the Pearl River.

The municipal transport department is also working on expanding the use of smartcards for the metro, taxis and other transport modes. More than 140,000 people use smartcards to take buses every day.

China's First Taxi Website Opens

Jilin The first website run by China's fledgling taxi industry, www.taxinet.com.cn, recently opened in Jilin city, Northeast China's Jilin Province. The website, operated by the local taxi authority, releases information on routine administration and from other government departments concerned. The website also offers a forum for officials and taxi drivers to share their views and air opinions.

Refurbished Luding Bridge Opens

Sichuan The five-month refurbishment of the Luding Bridge has recently been completed. Built in the 44th year of the reign of Qing Emperor Kangxi (1705), the bridge is secured on both sides of the Dadu River by 13 iron chains. At 101.67 metres in length and three metres in width, it has long been noted for its strategic position at the Sichuan-Tibet Highway and as a military ground. On May 29, 1935, the successful occupation of the Luding Bridge during the long march of the No. 1 troupe of the worker-and-peasant Red Guards caused the bridge to become widely known. It was listed as a state-level protection unit in 1961.

Sponsored by the State Relics Bureau, the refurbishment began on November 30, 2001. A total of 200 tons of cement was injected under high pressure into 68 cavities of the bridge, each with a diameter of 1.2 metres and a depth of 12 metres. The process fused the body and base of the bridge together, so as to prevent it from collapsing in future. In addition, nine 1.5-centimetre-wide cables have been added to strengthen the bridge's capacity to hold its own weight and that of people walking on it. As a result, the iron chains previously stabilising the bridge are now mere decoration.

Number of Wild Camels Rises to 400

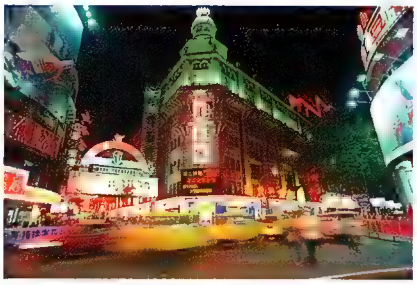
[illegible] The number of wild camels has increased to 400 in Northwest China's Gansu Province after 20 years of protection efforts. Gansu was estimated to have about 70 wild camels in the early 80s. There were about 2,000 wild camels in the world at the end of the 70s.

The Gansu provincial government has, in the past two decades, invested large sums of money to build a nature reserve for the wild camels and educate locals on the importance of protecting the endangered species.

China the Fifth of World's Destinations

China According to one of the latest news releases of WTO (World Tourism Organisation), in the year 2001, China was ranked as No.5 in the lists of both World's Top 15 Destinations and World's Top 15 Tourism Earners. While in the list of World's Top 15 Tourism Spenders, China was ranked as No. 7, WTO issued such lists on a yearly basis. WTO's statistics showed that in the last year, China received 33.2 million foreign visitors, an increase of 6.2 per cent over the year 2000; China's total tourism revenue in that year amounted to 17.8 billion US dollars, increasing by 9.7 per cent. The leading first four of the World Top 15 Destinations are France, Spain, U.S.A., and Italy, while the first four of the World Top 15 Tourism Earners are U.S.A, Spain, France and Italy, all the same four nations but in a different order.

Causeway Bay Plaza to Be Built in Old District



Tianjin Causeway Bay is a well-known shopping paradise in Hong Kong. After analysing the commercial environment of Hong Kong and the commercial district in Tianjin, Tianjin Longqiao Real Estate Development Ltd. has decided to construct a Causeway Bay Plaza southeast of the Old District. With an investment of nearly 100 million yuan, the plaza will cover an area of 100,000 square metres.

The Tianjin Causeway Bay Plaza will be a rendezvous point comprising a grand shopping mall, supermarket, restaurants, entertainment venues, banks and financial building, travel service centres, and cinema, creating a new type of commercial facility in Tianjin.

Macao Applies for World Cultural Heritage

Macao Macao has submitted an official application to the UNESCO for the listing of its 12 cultural relic sites as the World Cultural Heritage. A UNESCO task force plans to come here to scrutinise the sites next year. The shortlisted sites, including the A-Ma Temple, the Ruins of St. Paul's Church and the Mandarin's House, were recommended as a whole featuring a blending of oriental and Western styles.

As the oldest temple in Macao, the A-Ma Temple is dedicated to the Queen of Heaven, who is worshipped as the guardian of fishermen. It stands against a hill and faces the sea, with a couple of stone lions carved 300 years ago. St. Paul's Church was built under the direction of an Italian architect-priest in 1602. A fire razed the church on September 22, 1835, leaving just the facade and stone stairs as the people see today. Meanwhile, the Cultural Institute is mapping a plan to meticulously protect all the cultural heritage of Macao by putting a ceiling on the height of structures built around them and creating a more harmonious atmosphere.

A total of 20 Chinese cultural sites have so far been included into the World Cultural Heritage list, ranking third following Italy and Spain. In line with a UN regulation, the World Cultural Heritage should be protected and aided by all the UNESCO member.

Travel Court to Be Established in Sanya

Hainan The travel court will be built in three present people's courts named Tengqiao, Tianya, and Yacheng, all located in rural areas in Sanya, a city in South China's Hainan Island. It will be in charge of travel-related disputes happened in areas under Sanya's jurisdiction, including the Yalong Bay Scenic Area, Great East Sea Tourist Area, The Remotest Cape of the Earth Scenic Area and Nanshan Scenic Area. Through simple procedures, the court can judge the cases domestically. Besides, a tourism-specific conference court has been established in the people's court and intermediate people's court in Sanya's countryside. The court is responsible to handle complicated and more serious travel disputes.

China Tibet Information Centre Updates

Tibet The China Tibet Information Centre (CTIC) has recently launched its updated Chinese website. The site, www.tibetinfor.com, now contains 26 categories and over 200 columns. The updated design, featuring resources, news and services, has been streamlined for ease of use.

CTIC, the biggest comprehensive media agency promoting Tibet, introduces the region via publications, pictorials and films worldwide. Addressing political, economic, historical, cultural and regional topics, the centre has become an important window on the world for Tibet.

The centre first launched its Chinese website in May 2000, with an English website following in January 2001 and a Tibetan website in September 2001. Furthermore, the Tibet Autonomous Region has announced that residents of Hong Kong or Macao no longer need to secure a travel permit (except for some remote areas such as the Ngari Prefecture in western Tibet) to enter Tibet.

Forest Park Built on Gobi Desert in West China

Ningxia A forest park has been built on the inhospitable Gobi Desert at Shizuishan City in Northwest China's Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region.

The park, covering a total of 266 hectares, took five years to complete with local farmers removing gravel from the surface, adding a layer of earth and planting trees. More than 60 rare plants, such as agave and cactus, are growing in the 2,600-square-metre subtropical botanical hall.

Shizuishan, a coal city in the desert, has been undergoing tree-planting for decades as residents tried hard to improve the environment. Now the per-capita green area in the city has grown to 30 square metres. The city plans to expand the park's acreage to 666 hectares in three years so as to make it a green passage at Helan Mountains.

Wonders of Liuzhou

Writer: **Zhao Lihong** (趙麗宏)
Born in Shanghai, Zhao graduated from the Chinese Faculty of the East China Normal University. She now is a member of the State Committee of the China Writers Association, and vice president of the Shanghai Writers Association.

The fertile land of Liuzhou in Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region is encircled by rivers and has attracted settlers people for a long time. After many generations, the small village became a town which then grew into the city of Liuzhou. The landscape of Liuzhou has remained more or less the same for 2,000 years.

Liuzhou is also known as the "City of Gardens". Though small, Liuzhou boasts more than 10 parks with shade trees and reflecting water bodies. It is easy to forget you are in a busy modern city when in these parks. The Longtanchai (Dragon Pool Hairpin) Garden with its green waters, deep pools, and hills covers 533.6 hectares and is bigger than the Summer Palace in Beijing. It takes more than a day to see the entire park. The performance terrace of Liu Sanjie (Third Sister Liu) is in the Yufeng (Fish's Peak) Garden. A celebrated singer born in Liuzhou, her singing still influences today's generations. The antiphonal singing of the locals can always be heard in Jiexin (Heart of the Street) Park. They express all their sorrows and happiness through the songs.

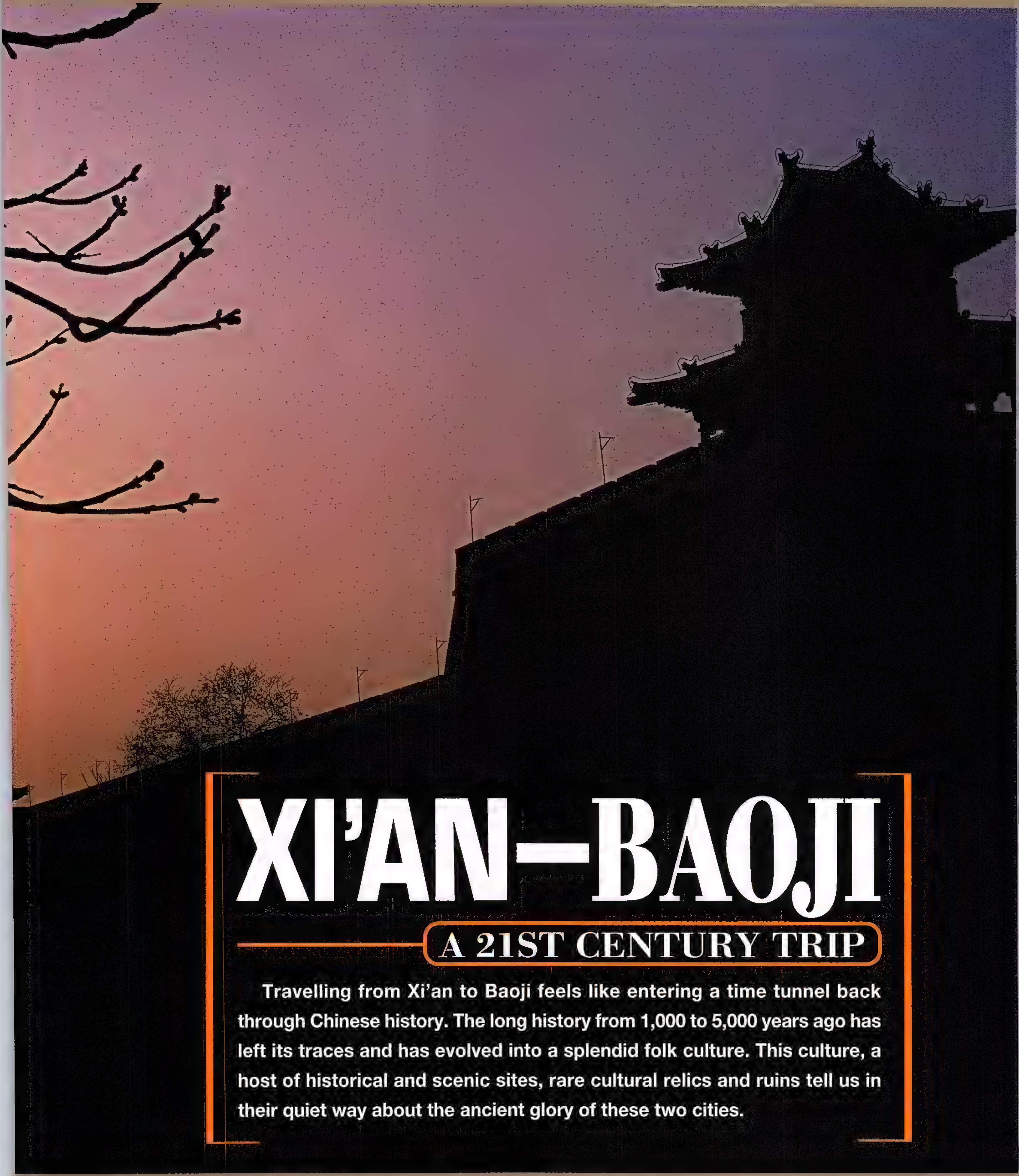
The Shrine of Liu Zongyuan (773 — 819) is a must-to-see in Liuzhou. During his three years' demotion to Liuzhou, the Tang-dynasty poet had promoted education, released the peasants, renovated the city, planted trees, altered local traditions and established numerous welfare policies. The descendants regard him as "Liu Liuzhou" and commemorated his merits in a shrine, where there is a remarkable tablet called the "Three Extremes Tablet". The words inscribed on it include the poems of Han Yu (768 — 824, a Tang-dynasty poet), the writings of Su Dongpo (1037 — 1101, a Song-dynasty poet), and the legend of Liu Zongyuan. Fresh flowers and burning incense are constantly placed in front of the tomb in the shrine.

The most wonderful part of Liuzhou, however, is its beautiful stones. It would be a pity touring Liuzhou without appreciating its characteristic stones. Where to see them? The answer is amidst the mountains along the riverbanks and rapids. Without a keen eye, these stones look very ordinary. The stones are the essence of heaven and earth and a wonder of the universe. The people of Liuzhou are fond of collecting stones, and if they don't they are not worthy to be called "Liuzhou people". There are many museums exhibiting strange stones and many are family-run stone galleries set up in Liuzhou. Even a practical and rational person's imagination runs wild while visiting these galleries. There are stones as small as beans and others the size of melons, none having the same colour. Some of the patterns look like crests, others like clouds, rainbows, lightning, streams, or even huge rivers.

The stones are formed naturally, and it is not unusual to see a large variety of patterns on them. But Liuzhou stones amaze and impress people because some of the patterns look very much like the paintings of great artists. I saw one, whose shape resembles a dinosaur's egg. It has patterns resembling a naive child dressed in ancient Chinese clothes, who is crossing his legs, slanting his head, and looking up to the sky from a cave. If it is a true drawing, it must be top quality and valuable. There was another pale yellow stone with black lines. Though quite simple, I could imagine a mountain, a pavilion, water, clouds, pines and lakes on it. I also saw a stone having such colourful patterns that reminded me of the drawing "Impression, Sunrise", of French painter Claude Monet.

The discovery of these strange stones is the result of thoroughgoing searching of the Liuzhou people. Stones can be found everywhere, but it is rare to find truly outstanding ones. Strange stones are gifts from nature, the essence of man's wisdom and imagination, and is a reward for the cleverness and perseverance of the Liuzhou locals.

My friend led me to the night market of strange stones in Liuzhou. In the darkness, the stones still revealed their uniqueness and glamour. I selected a piece of Sanjiang (Three Rivers) stone as big as my fist. Later, I brought it back to Shanghai and placed on my desk. Everyday when I touch it, I can feel the coolness penetrating deep inside.



XI'AN–BAOJI

A 21ST CENTURY TRIP

Travelling from Xi'an to Baoji feels like entering a time tunnel back through Chinese history. The long history from 1,000 to 5,000 years ago has left its traces and has evolved into a splendid folk culture. This culture, a host of historical and scenic sites, rare cultural relics and ruins tell us in their quiet way about the ancient glory of these two cities.

Photos and article by Shi Baoxiu

NEW LIFE IN THE ANCIENT CITY OF CHANG'AN

Known as Chang'an in ancient times, Xi'an was the oldest and longest lasting capital city in China. It is regarded as one of the "four great ancient capitals of the world" along with Athens in Greece, Cairo in Egypt and Rome in Italy.

The city of Xi'an witnessed the atrocities of the First Emperor of Qin when he "burned books and killed intellectuals," and the tragedy when the Lord of Chu set fire to the Efang Palace, burning it to ashes. The city was also home to the great work *Records of the Historian* by Sima Qian (135–87 B.C.), and the glowing poems of Tang poets Li Bai and Du Fu. It was here that the very different but equally romantic affairs between Emperor Gaozong of the Tang Dynasty with Wu Zetian, later an empress, and between Emperor Xuanzong of the Tang and Concubine Lady Yang took place. These became themes of many pieces of literature down through time. The once powerful and mighty imperial Tang Dynasty, which enjoyed one of the zeniths in China's feudal history propelled Chang'an to its prime of glory and splendor. At the time, envoys and monks from Japan, merchants and armies from Arab kingdoms, and followers of Catholicism from Europe all came to settle down in Xi'an, trying to gain a "green card" status. Sadly after the Tang, Xi'an declined, forever losing its position as the national capital. Fortunately, the founding emperor of the Ming Dynasty had a huge city built on the ruins of the old Tang Dynasty royal city in the 13th century. The new city walls, the original pagodas dating back to the Tang Dynasty, the nearly 100 mausoleums from the Qin, Han, and Tang dynasties that provide eternal resting places for royal families, generals and ministers, and the countless treasures buried underground altogether render the ancient city of Xi'an an enticing attraction. In particular, the terracotta warriors of the Qin Dynasty regarded as the "most spectacular archaeological discovery of the 20th century" draw the attention of tourists the world over.

No matter how long a city's history it continues to change with the march of time. Nobody can obstruct the rule that an old city should acquire new looks. In a mere few recent years, Xi'an has gone through tremendous changes. The old streets are no longer. Shops with hundreds of years of history have suddenly been replaced by stores for the "new generation of people" and the thousand-year-old ancient pagodas are now within clusters of newly completed skyscrapers.

The First Circular Park in the World

Visitors to Xi'an must not miss seeing the 500-year-old city wall. The wall surroundes the city and was built by Zhu Yuanzhang, or Emperor Taizu, of the Ming Dynasty (1368—1644). At the time, it was a rammed earth wall. During the Qing Dynasty (1644—1911), bricks were added. In the early 20th century, a series of warlords launched repeated attacks on the defenses on the city. Although they scared people with blasts and black smoke, they did little harm to the city wall. Later, when the Japanese bombed Xi'an, the city wall became a good place to dig shelters. By the end of the Cultural Revolution (1966—1976), the ancient wall was full of scars. During the 1980s Xi'an spent five to six years repairing the city wall. The new wall was not listed as a World Heritage Site. The trade-off for not getting listed is that residents in Xi'an have a great place to enjoy their free-time.

In the world today, there is no other place like the circular park around the city wall in Xi'an. Every day large numbers of people visit the park, yet it never feels crowded. People enjoy the park like happy fish swimming in large ponds. In the morning, people file out of the inner-wall district and quietly go to the parks, to walk at leisure, jog, or exercise by stretching their arms and kicking their legs. Here, you can forget your age or status. You can climb trees trunk like a monkey, go about flowerbeds like a dog, or press your fat body against rocks and trees like pigs. Nobody laughs, for everyone in the park is acting freely.

The park is full of people with special skills. Breathing exercise masters sit or squat in complete stillness, active sportspeople do all kinds of martial arts and swordplay, people play waist drums, and others play traditional sports. A "yuanji" martial arts may draw crowds of up to 100 people who follow the teacher turning and bending at the waist, stretching their limbs, and moving their bodies slowly and rhythmically. International ballroom dancing is even livelier. No matter which country's music is played men and women immediately pair up and begin dancing. *The Blue Danube* requires one dance style while Peking opera *Yang Zirong Killing a Tiger* calls for a totally different style and speed. It seems people can do just about any dance, foreign or Chinese. They have a knack for combining both and rendering a local touch to things foreign benefiting themselves in the process.

The On-going Qin and Peking Operas

Deep in the woods opera fans who getogether to sing and play the music from Shaanxi, Henan and Peking operas. The foot of the city wall is cool under the shade trees. On the opposite side of the moat cars and buses dash about, but in the park you can't hear the traffic noise. The towering wall on the side of the park blocks the hustle and bustle. In the pleasant breeze, people sing and enact young women characters in the opera. *The Cold House (Hanyao)*, and "black-headed" characters sing heroic tunes from the *Changban Slope* at the tops of their voices, blood vessels bulging on their necks and sweat pouring out. When I asked, it turned out that none of the performers were

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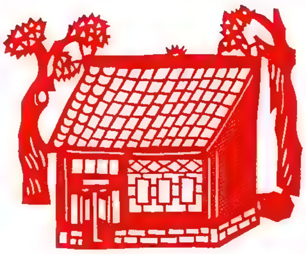
Previous page: The ancient city wall of Xi'an has over 500 years' of history and was erected during the country's wall-building campaign begun by the first Ming emperor Zhu Yuanzhang.
1. The Juanmen Cave at the East Gate of the ancient wall of Xi'an.
2. People come to fly kites or have fun with birds at the East City.
3. Another corner of the East Gate is a child's paradise.
4. People doing morning exercises in the circular park.

No. 1 Oddity in Shaanxi:
Houses with Shed Roofs

In Guanzhong area in central Shaanxi, traditional houses only have one-slope shed tile roofs. Local people refer to this style of house as a "mansion house", while those with roofs sloping from both sides of a ridge are known as "temple houses". The shed roof house saves building materials and the towering back wall provides strong protection.



professional, just people who love to sing. When someone stops to listen to them or applaud, it cheers them up for the entire day.

The two Yu opera troupes in and outside the Lesser East Gate mentioning. Over a decade ago they performed in a makeshift tent stage in the citadel outside the east gate. The back stage was their cloak room and home. When her baby cried for food, the "princess"rushed off-stage, rolled up her costume and breastfeed the baby. She took no notice of others as her baby sucked one nipple and played with the other with its little hand. After the circular park was built, the troupe moved to the stage where they regularly perform today. The performances are not only Henan style, but also include Western operas and pop songs. There is no wall around the stage and no admission charge. Spectators can rent a stool and get a cup of water for two yuan. The stay as long as they like from early morning to late in the evening. Some people don't rent the stool. Instead they stand or bring their own chair. Be aware that very suddenly, a young woman with heavy makeup may jump off the stage and addressing you as "uncle", offer you a cup of hot tea, bow and then turn away. At such a moment, even if you wanted to walk away, your legs will not obey. You end up donating three to five yuan. There are occasions when wealthy spectators give tips of 10 to 20 yuan. I went there several times and always found these spectators surrounded with beautiful young women. The performers are almost all women in their 30s and 40s who don stylish and fashionable clothing, carry handbags embroidered with pearls, and possess not a trace of their rural countryside background.

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Bird Cage Carriers and Calligraphers

Something serene to see is to watch people carry their caged birds around and the calligraphy drawers. People walking about with birdcages are seen in just about every part of China. The bird market by the Liuhua Lake in Guangzhou sells over 50 varieties of birds, cages, bird food and other supplies. Here birds lover gather together for morning tea. In terms of both professionalism and scale, there is no other place like it. It is noisy and little bit too commercial. The bird owners at the foot of the Xi'an wall, however, are there simply for peace of mind. The birds' expressions of love and their sweet sings are far more enjoyable than listening Western or taped music. The bird's song makes one tranquil, free of worry, excitement, agony and desire.

Enjoy calligraphy? People hold a bucket of water that serves as ink

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in the left hand, a big brush in the right, and use the cement as their paper. They dip the brush in the water, bend their body and move backwards like farmers ploughing fields as they brush characters on the ground. I found eight or nine out of ten calligraphers are children six, seven and even four or five years old. The rest were old people. Most are proficient but some were beginners. No matter old or young, experienced or beginner, everybody was intent. I also learned that the number of people practicing calligraphy this way was increasing. Many of the nations best young calligraphers began by practicing this way.

I lived for two years in Shenzhen and often took after dinner walks along Binhe Avenue. I always saw a very thin old man squatting on the pavement dipping a small writing brush in a small bottle of water and drawing on the ground. A heavy built northerner joined him, following his example. About a month later, the second man disappeared and the old man was alone again. I asked him what happened to the fat old man and he said the guy could not endure the loneliness in Shenzhen and had gone back north. Some time later, a patrolman became interested. He would park his police motorcycle by the roadside, put both hands behind his back and watch the old man write. Occasionally he would chat with the old man and then mount his motorcycle. Later, the thin old man no longer showed up and I never saw his little hunched body again.

I got to know Ma who is in his 70s, who came to Xi'an in the 40s to escape the Japanese after fleeing his hometown. He comes to the park everyday to practice dance. He also does Taiji, Yuanji and raises birds. Though old, he fall in love with ballroom dance. His dancing companions are women in their 30s and 40s. Perhaps this is the reason many of the wrinkles have disappeared from his face and neck. He and his wife have a combined monthly pension of about 1,000 yuan. Their children have to support their own children who are in school and they have nothing left to offer the old couple. Food in Xi'an, however, is very cheap. Unless they visit restaurants too often, half their pension pays for food. They spend the other half on clothes and leisure. The park does not charge admission so he can afford to come every day. He said he couldn't find a single worried person.

1. Chess games are the favourite of the men.
2. Using water for ink and a big brush of palm fibre, street artists showcase their calligraphy techniques on the ground.
3. Birdcage carriers breed birds for fun only, never for commerce.
4. There are also children practicing martial arts around the city wall.
5. The broad city wall is wide enough to drive five cars abreast.

No. 2 Oddity in Shaanxi:
Wearing Handkerchief on the Head

Middle-aged and old women in rural areas in Shaanxi always wear a handkerchief on their heads when going to the market or visiting friends or relatives. The handkerchief is both for decoration and to keep off dust. They hold another handkerchief in their hand or tuck it between jacket buttons leaving an end dangling in the wind.

Larger than the Hall of Supreme Harmony of Forbidden City in Beijing

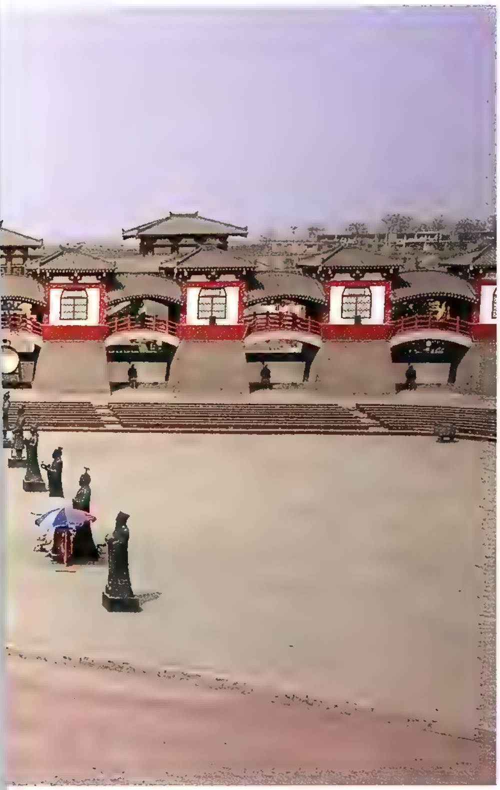
Xi'an experienced its glory and splendor during the Qin (221—207 B.C.), Han (206 B.C.—220 A.D.) and Tang (618—907 A.D.) dynasties. Each of these periods had its magnificent palaces including the Efang, Weiyang and Daming palaces. According to our ancestors, each of them was more magnificent than the last. Unfortunately, a dynastic ruler was always purged with tremendous hatred. The people destroyed all the houses of the overthrown monarch and slew all his kin. The Efang Palace of the First Emperor of Qin was burned down by Xiang Yu. The Weiyang Palace of the Han emperors was razed by soldiers of the rebellious Dong Zhuo, while the Daming Palace of the Tang emperors was destroyed by rebels led by Huang Chao. The symbols of the splendor and glory of the three most prosperous and powerful dynasties were burned. Examples are the terra-cotta army of the First Emperor of Qin, the pottery figurines in the tomb of Emperor Jing of Han and the six horses in the tomb of Emperor Taizong of Tang.

In the year 2000, a group of farmers in suburban Xi'an using their own resources turned a flat wheat field into a new Efang Palace some 300 metres from the original site. The speed of this construction was far faster than when the despotic ruler of the Qin mobilized the entire nation to build his original Efang Palace. Like the original, the new palace has 12 gold figures standing outside, and a long corridor. The main hall stands over 30 metres above ground level, much more magnificent than the Hall of Supreme Harmony in the Forbidden City in Beijing, the Dragon Pavilion in Kaifeng and the Bronze Swallow Terrace in the Film and TV City in Zhuozhou, Hebei Province.

You have to be physically fit to visit the farmers' replica of the Efang Palace. It takes at least two hours to tour the palace rooms, and it is less than 10 percent as big as the original Efang Palace of the Qin Dynasty.

Sweeping Only During Peak Season

Walking on leaden legs from the new Efang Palace, I saw two women weeding in the fields. I asked them where the original site of



The History of the Efang Palace

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The official palace of the Qin Dynasty, the Efang was located near Efang Village 15 kilometres west of Xi'an proper. It is under state protection and listed as a major historical site.

After the First Emperor of Qin unified the entire country, he introduced sweeping political, economic and cultural reforms. He standardised the script, legal codes, currency and measurements. He built roads linking up various parts of the country and the Great Wall to ward off the northern nomadic Xiongnu tribe. All these measures helped to consolidate the unified feudal kingdom. At the same time, in Xianyang, he constructed a capital city and palaces and built a mausoleum using the concentrated manpower, material resources and technologies of the six states he brought together into one nation. Construction of the Efang Palace began in 212 B.C. At the time the emperor planned to have a group of palace structures built and the Efang was the first of the series.

Unfortunately, when Xiang Yu, a warlord, fought into Xianyang, he diverted his hatred for the Qin regime to its structures and had the entire palace burnt to the ground.

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the Efang was. They smiled and said "Right under your feet!" I did not believe them for I couldn't find even a trace of the palace foundation. I thought they did not understand my question. So I asked a young man nearby where the tablet marking the site was. He pointed saying "Down the slope." I walked one kilometre through a peach orchard to where the ground was abruptly lower. I had been on a terrace. I realised the two women were right. I found the earthen was rammed as if by machine. The rammed earth was four to five metres thick and ran half a kilometre. The places where the earth had sunk or been dug out by farmers have been repaired with brick and mud by cultural relic administrators.

I climbed up the terrace, which was the foundation of the original Palace. I asked a farmer working in the fields, "Do you know you are ploughing royal land?" Taken by surprise be immediately smiled, saying yes. I asked him if the land produced good crops. He said the land saved water endured drought since there was rammed earth two feet under the topsoil and water cannot percolate deeply. One watering during a seasonal drought is enough to grow crops, whereas the other land in the area is loose and permeable. It has to be watered at least three times and the crops may still require more. The one difficulty is that the earth is extremely hard and compacted. Even the strongest village lad using a very pointed stick could barely manage to break away a piece of earth the size of a walnut. According to the old man the ground is incredibly difficult to work. I asked him what benefit the new Efang Palace had brought the farmers. He said the palace hired only a small number of staff from the village and the benefit to each family was not equal. Each year, however, those villagers over 60 got a free pass to tour the palace. When they were tired of seeing it time and again, they gave the pass to their friends and relatives. He said, "Xiang Yu was certainly a villain to have burned the old palace, for burning something down was much easier than building it."

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1. **Enjoying the Efang Palace behind the statue of the First Qin Emperor.**
2. **The Main Hall of Efang Palace is even larger than the Hall of Supreme Harmony in the Forbidden City in Beijing.**
3. **Legends about the Qin Dynasty are painted on the walls of the corridor.**
4. **Tourists can take electronic motor carts with dragonheads to tour the Efang Palace.**
5. **Old Chen says his fields are too hard and compacted to plough.**

No. 3 Oddity in Shaanxi:
Not Marrying Daughters Away From Hometown

Men in Shaanxi are known to be conservative and very strict with women. Girls are forbidden to have contact with outsiders, to speak to strangers and laugh loudly. Rules governing young unmarried women are even more numerous. In particular, they do not want their daughters to marry away from home. Marrying outside the village is as far as they are allowed to go. It is absolutely out of the question for their daughters to marry outside the province. The parents fear that their daughters may run into difficulties and become helpless while living in a strange place. Of course all these concepts are changing very quickly.

A Scene Both Old and New

In recent years, squares have sprung up in Xi'an, each new one larger than the last. Examples are the squares outside the South Gate, the Greater Wild Goose Pagoda Square and the Bell Tower Square.

The Bell-and-Drum Tower Square is between two of the most famous ancient structures in the heart of Xi'an. A huge cast iron bell is rung every morning to wake up the residents. On the Drum Tower, a huge drum is struck at sunset, reminding residents it is time to return home. The two together gave rise to the practice of "morning bell and sunset drum" in ancient times.

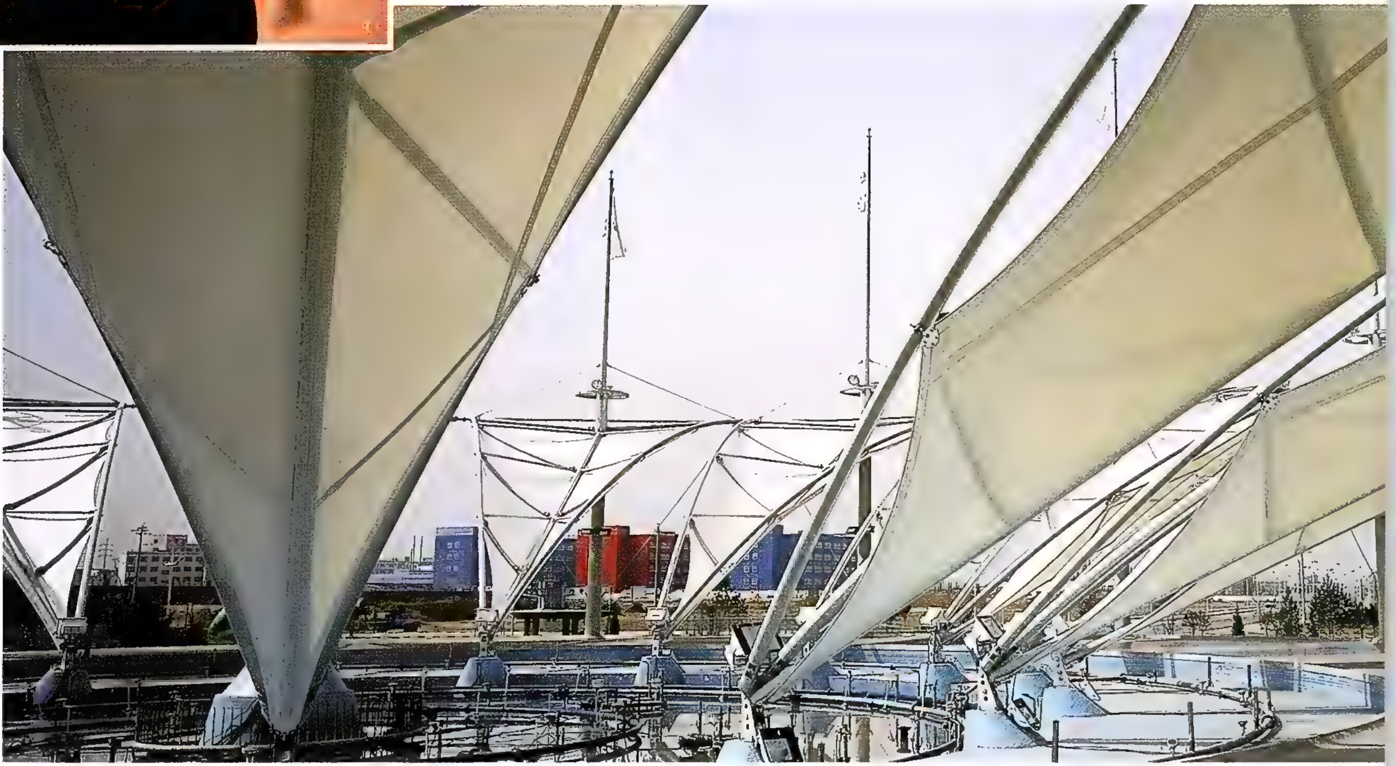
Originally small shops including the Tongshengxiang (同盛祥) Mutton Soup Restaurant and Defachang (德發長) Dumpling Restaurant, and rundown houses stood between the two towers. Now all the old houses have been demolished. In their place the level ground is paved with stone slabs, and there are no buildings between the two towers. On one side of the square are new buildings in the ancient architectural style. They boldly display signs reading Tongsheng Xiang Mutton Soup and Defachang Dumplings.

The square has an underground mall called the Century Golden Flower Mall, which local people refer to as the white collar shopping centre. The local folks only go in to look. At most they buy ice cream cones for their youngsters. Everything is so expensive that they don't even dare look at the price. A pair of socks costs 50 yuan! That's enough to feed thier family for a week, so they prefer to stay above ground and enjoy the inviting and friendly stone stools and railings. Farmers coming to the city for seasonal work may linger for hours in the square looking to see how foreigners dress and where they go. Stone drums serve as stools and are usually too large for one person. Young lovers sit on the same stool for hours embracing, kissing, and necking, oblivious to passersby.

Xi'an, a City for Kite Flying

The Greater Wild Goose Pagoda Square lies outside the Great Cien Temple. The place is now an open space which was once crowded with small houses. In the centre stands a bronze statue of the Tang Dynasty monk Xuan Zang. Holding a Buddhist stick in his left hand, the handsome monk appears kind and determined. The theme of Buddhist statues elsewhere is always of a fat and contented Bhudda. The statue of this prominent monk is placed in the square so that both Chinese and foreign pilgrims can come to worship. I remember seeing a statue of Chairman Mao Zedong at Xincheng Square in Xi'an during the 1960s and 1970s. At the time, the statue provided a popular background for group photos. Today is the era of the great Tang monk. From morning to sunset, there is a steady stream of people vying to have their picture taken at the statue with the Greater Wild Goose Pagoda in the background.

In spring and autumn, without any mobilization order, people file to the Bell Tower Square, Greater Wild Goose Pagoda Square, South



Gate Square, Xincheng Square, Hanyuandian Amusement Square, Zhangjiapu Square and the open fields in the suburbs to fly kites. Weifang in Shandong is known as the home of kite making, but Xi'an is the place to fly them. The wind in spring is steady and consistent. When the sun moves into the west and ground temperatures drop, the air is still warm causing the wind to quicken, which makes it especially easy to fly kites. During the weekends, lots of people, mostly schoolchildren and retirees take out their kites. My neighbour who is more than 70 years old often takes his granddaughter to Leyou highland to fly kites. Neither of them can run fast or far. When the wind is weak, their kite does not go high, but they are never disheartened. They keep taking turns carrying the kite and running, hoping to get it to fly. In the end, they manage to get it high into the azure sky.

When the weather cooperates, a kite the size of a dining table can quickly soar appearing the size of a small blade of grass as it sways and darts through the sky. I tugged at my "gold fish" kite and talked with the old man. I told him that when I was a naughty boy 30 or 40 years ago, I always flew kites from the top of the city wall. When my kite flew very high, I imagined that the kite represented my future and one day I too would fly high. Later as I grew up and worked at a steady career, my ideals and hopes seemed harder to define. Squinting his eyes as he tended his swaying string, the old man said he shared the same kind of feelings when he was young. Now he was old and flew kites every day and he did not care if people laughed at him when he stumbled to the left and right while running. This was because when he flew kites he got into the habit of forgetting everything else, including his present and past life, the sweet and the bitter. His mind travelled with the kite, higher and higher. He had to run to fly kites and that gave him an opportunity to get some physical exercises. But more importantly, when he watched the kite flying, he remembered the past with great pleasure.

Kites big and small can be bought in all the city's squares for between five and 20 yuan. You'll have to pay extra for string and other flying gear. I often see foreign visitors buy kites and immediately fly them with great pleasure. Then while the kites are still high in the sky, they pass the string to the children playing nearby and give them the gift of the kite. Then off they go to do other things.

1. **Tourists are fond of dragon flying kites in Xi'an.**
2. **Nanjiao Playground, once visited by many Tang poets, is ideal for kite-flying.**
3. **A modern statue outside the Provincial Library.**
4. **People always pass by the South Gate Square in Xi'an.**
5. **The Times Square situated in Chang'an County is a new sight in the ancient city.**

No. 4 Oddity in Shaanxi: **Pot Lid-like Pancakes**

People in Shaanxi refer to the large size pancakes, those over 60cm in diametre and 10cm in thickness, as pot lids. Those made in Qishan County, Baoji, are reputed to be the best. To make a giant pancake takes two strong men to press out the dough with a huge roller. Then they put the flattened dough in a large flat-bottomed pot and cook it over a low fire for over three hours. The pancake is very dry and salty and stays fresh for a long time. People in Shaanxi take along this traditional food when they travel long distances.

A STREET OF CULTURAL TRADITIONS: NEW INVENTIONS USING OLD TRADITIONS

A Myriad of Arts and Handicrafts from China and the West

Starting at the archway named Shuyuanmen (書院門), or Academy Gate is a stone road lined with antique, painting, and calligraphy shops. They sell "four treasures for the study", imitation cultural relics and handicrafts. I visited this street yearly for more than ten years. At first people sold copper coins, old tile ends, ancient pottery vats, old stamps, and calligraphy copybooks from various dynasties. Later they sold tricolour Tang pottery, small terracotta figures, Yaozhou ceramics, and even embroidered shoes for bound feet and opium smoking pipes from the Qing Dynasty. Everything is sold here.

During the last two years, folk art has appeared on this street. It began with farmers' paintings and was followed by paper-cuts and New Year's woodblock prints, then clay figures, and embroidered pillowcovers. One day in March, I went into a paper-cut store whose owner spoke with a heavy Henan accent. He is a skilled paper-cut artist from Henan Province who came to Xi'an to make a living. In his shop are complete sets of paper-cut with the themes "Ten Oddities in Shaanxi", "Folk Operas in Guanzhong Area" and "Customs of Northern Shaanxi" and art with Christian themes. Genuinely Chinese paper-cuts are made by farmer-artists living in the countryside. These may tell stories from the Bible and portray Chinese Christians attending mass! You cannot help admiring the imagination of Chinese folk artists and their openness to Western religion.

Restoring the Past While Following the Trends

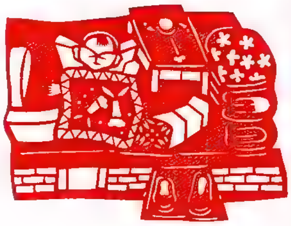
Ever since Jia Ping'ao, an author from Xi'an, published his novel Feidu, or The Abandoned City, about life in this city, the ancient Chinese wind instrument called Xun has been a popular item sold on this street. Then movie director Zhang Yimou shot the movie To Live which won for Ge You the best actor award. Donkey hide puppets made in Guanzhong were in the stores for a time. Lately it seems the number of donkeys used as farm animals has rapidly declined. And traditions are being restored. Some shop carry big collections of large two foot long writing brushes. Officials, veteran workers and pupils practise calligraphy these days, and even foreigners doing business or studying are keen to do it. Paper and brushes sell briskly these days!

There are several other places in Xi'an where antiques, paintings, calligraphy and antiques are sold. One is the street at the north gate of the Drum Tower. Another is in front of the Eight Immortal Temple at Dongguan. A third is the antique market on Zhuque Road. These places sell just about everything, both genuine and copies. Whether you can find what you really like depends on your knowledge and luck.

1. The old cultural street at the Academy Gate is crowded with bric-a-brac stores.
2. Souvenirs made of woven grass are sold on the street.
3. The old cultural street at the North Court Gate.
4. A stand selling calligraphy rubbings and paintings.
5. Genuine and fake bronze coins and wares are mixed together.
6. A bric-a-brac store at the foot of the Drum Tower.
7. Models of terracotta warriors are everywhere.
8. Pretty domestic embroidery.
9. A calligraphy brush shop on the cultural street.

No. 5 Oddity in Shaanxi: **Stone Pillows**

People in Shaanxi sleep on earthen beds. They are quite hard, but the stone pillows are even harder Old people in particular like to rest their heads on cold stones while sleeping. If you give them soft cotton pillows, they feel uncomfortable, acquiring excessive inner heat. These are not ordinary stones, but jade from Lantian or crystals stones Some pillows are even ceramic. Naturally they are all beautiful arts and crafts.



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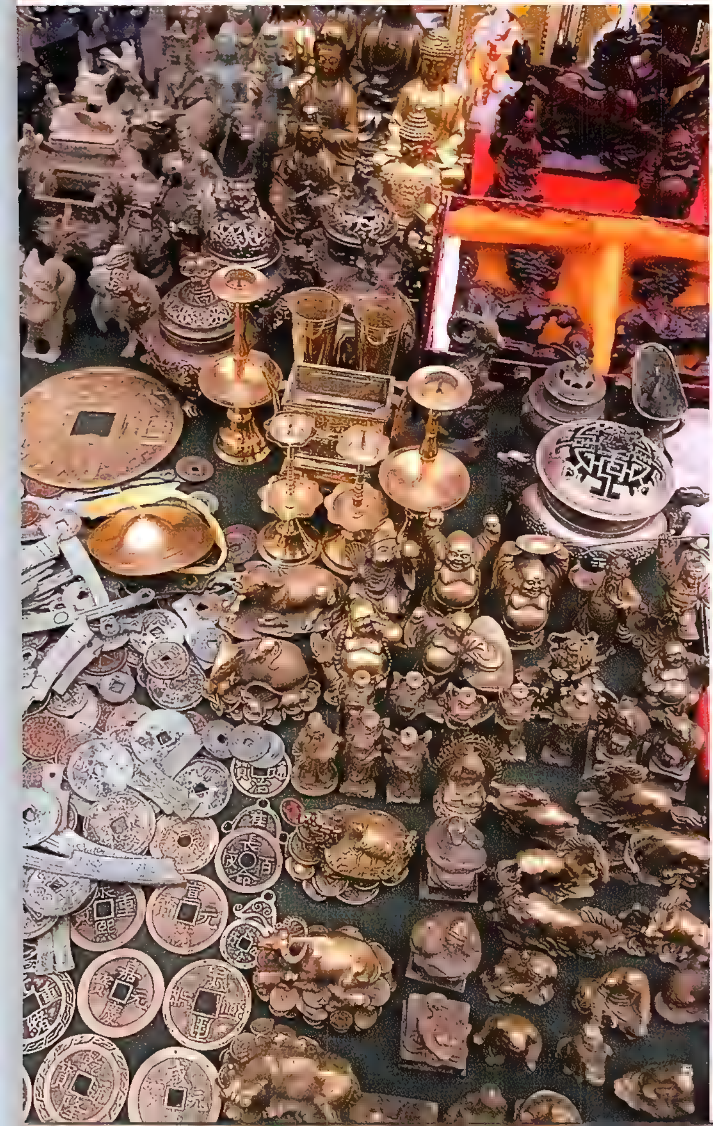

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NEW SCENES OUTSIDE THE HAN CHANG'AN CITY

Article by Liu Jun Edited by Jackie

2

The First Largest City in China

Xi'an is located mostly on the Weihe Plain 400 metres above sea level. The terrain is highest in the southeast and lowest in the northwest. To the east are the Bahe and Chanhe rivers. In the south are the Yuhe, Haohe, Laohe and Fenghe rivers. To the north are the Jinghe and Weihe rivers. These rivers gave rise to the expression that "Eight rivers surround Chang'an". Among the eight, the Weihe is the longest and widest and flows along the northern boundary of the city from east to west.

The ruins of the Han Dynasty city of Chang'an near the present city are 10 kilometres northwest of Xi'an. The capital of the Western Han Dynasty (206 B.C.—25), was not only the national political, economic and cultural centre at the time, but also an international metropolis, just like Rome, the Italian capital. After Zhang Qian opened up trade with the Western Regions, Chang'an became the natural bridge between Asia and Europe and served as the starting point of the Silk Road.

The ancient city was shaped in an irregular square with the southern part resembling the Southern Dipper and the north resembling the Big Dipper. It was known as the Dipper City. The city wall was built with rammed loess, rising 12 metres in height. Now the remains of the wall are generally between 0.8 to two metres high with the highest point at three metres. The width of the walls foundation was 12 to 16 metres. There were 12 gates in the wall. Inside the city were eight crisscrossing major streets dividing the city into a chessboard. The 5,500-metre Anmen Street, the longest, was aligned north to south through the city centre. The water supply and drainage systems were also well planned. Major structures were mostly palace halls, residents of the nobility, and temples. It was the first large heavily populated large in Chinese history.

Riverside Grassland: No Longer the Same

The riverside grassland refers to the area northeast of the ruins of Chang'an up to the banks of the Weihe River. Today you can travel north out of the city along Yingbin Road and then turn on to Xitong Expressway leading to the Xi'anyang Airport for 18 kilometres, and you will come to the riverside grassland. The glory of the Han Dynasty capital of Chang'an is now replaced by rows of holiday hotels and mountain villas, which combine both Chinese and Western architectural styles.

The New Peach Blossom Garden Mountain Villa is one kilometre east off Xitong Expressway. Inside, a typical northern China village

greets visitors, who enter through a quadrangle house along a stone-paved path. In the courtyard are stone stools, tables a grinding stone and everything else a farmer needs in his courtyard. Ears of corn and hot chilies are hung under the eaves. Brightly coloured paper-cuts displaying Guanzhong customs and habits are pasted on the windows. It is an ideal place to enjoy a typical farmer's dinner and have a good chat. The mountain villa is complete with modern recreational facilities like dancing rooms, a golf course, showers, a swimming pool, a teahouse and a sports centre. With a complete list of both Chinese and Western facilities, it is certainly an ideal holiday destination.

Four kilometres northeast of here is another holiday resort — the Weiyang Lake Amusement Park. On the shore of the parks artificial lake grow swaying willow trees and green grass. You can take a walk among the trees and down winding corridors and go fishing or have a roated meat picnic. Many young couples enjoy happy moments in small tents by the lake. There are all kinds of recreational activities including speedboats, waterskiing, and the only "bunjee jump" in Shaanxi. It is a paradise for the young and adventurous.

The 27 plus-hectares East Jin Peach Blossom Garden is located in the modern agricultural development zone five kilometres southwest off Xitong Expressway. It creates a world of peace and tranquillity with croplands, an animal farm and nursery gardens. Visitors can help cultivate grass, grow vegetables, raise chickens and ducks and milk the cows. Urban dwellers living far from farmlands and crops will enjoy thier time here partaking in agricultural activities. The Garden offers an ideal destination combining collective farming with touring. The Xi'an Modern Agricultural Comprehensive Development Zone five kilometres further west is home to the Weishui Garden Hot Spring Holiday Village. Occupying an area of 53 hectares, it brings together hot springs, a mini but international standard formula car racing track, speedboats and a swimming pool. You can also enjoy bumper cars, bowling, archery, chicken fights, and fishing. With its Banyan Tree Amusement Park, Karst Cave Waterfall, Mid-lake Teahouse and sauna rooms, it is the largest sports and recreational centre in Xi'an.

Translated by F. Huang

1. **Legend has it that Wu Zetian, China's first female emperor, was a nun in this old temple at the Chang'an City. (by Shi Baoxiu)**
2. **Outside the Eastern Jin Peach Garden. (by Liu Jun)**
3. **An ancient terrace at the ruins of Chang'an City. (by Shi Baoxiu)**
4. **The earth terrace at the ruins of Weiyang Palace. (by Shi Baoxiu)**

No. 6 Oddity in Shaanxi: **Waist Belt-like Noodles**

Guanzhong in central Shaanxi is a producer of first-class wheat whose flour has a strong elastic texture. And people here have a particular weakness for noodles, in fact by no means less so than the Italians. Noodles here can be as narrow as pine needles or as wide as waist belts. When the hand-pulled wide noodles are boiled in hot water, they do not disintegrate, but they feel better in the mouth, thanks to their elastic texture.

"A Forest of Universities"

Xi'an is known in China for its large number of universities. Next to Beijing and Shanghai, Xi'an has more universities than any other major cities in China. Indeed, in the south suburbs,which are steeped in ancient cultural traditions, there are more than forty public colleges and universities, and an even greater number of private universities. The southern suburbs have the reputation of being the "university town". The universities border the ancient capita an modern and ancient cultures merge here. This gives rise to a unique university cultural centre. In the protected area between the southern city wall of Xi'an and the southern ruins of the Tang Dynasty city of Chang'an are located Chang'an University, Xi'an Building Material Technology Institute, the Northwest University, Northwest Polytechnic University, Northwest Electronic Technology University, Shaanxi Normal University, Xi'an Foreign Languages College, the Institute of Fine Arts, the Music Conservatory.Admist the university campuses are the Greater Wild Goose Pagoda, the Lesser Wild Goose Pagoda, and Shaanxi Museum of History. The Xi'an Communication University, one of the 36 key higher learning institutions in China, sits between Xingqing Palace Park and Qinglong Temple.

Each university is a garden. As you walk onto a campus from the hustling and bustling commercial streets, you immediately feel the beauty and tranquillity. If interested, you may visit showrooms and exhibits for more information about these schools. The Northwest University has the longest history, and here 70 years ago, Lu Xun (the author of *The True Story of Ah Q*) lectured on "A Brief History of Chinese Novels" and "The Relationship Between Writings of the Wei and Jin Dynasties on Drug and Liquour" here.

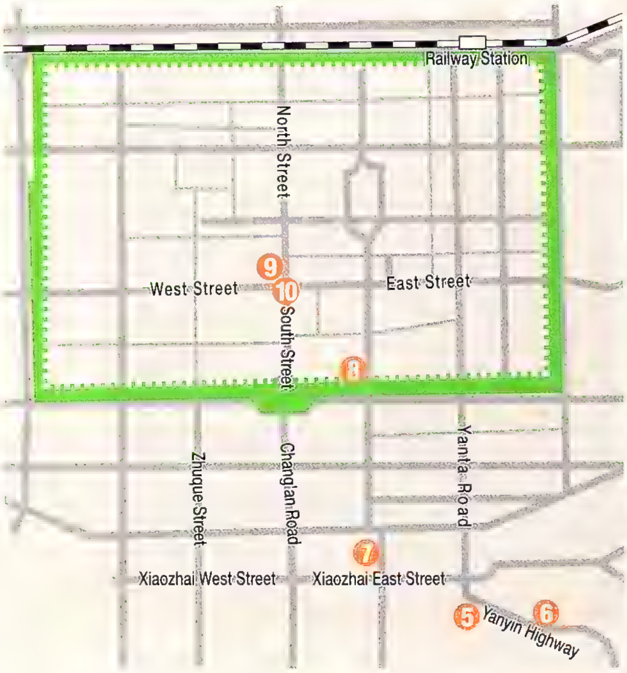
Xi'an is home to experts and scientific research achievement. But there has been a shortage of talent and facilities for conducting scientific research. In recent years, the city has been working hard to make up for the missing resources. Xi'an has, in fact the right conditions to provide what is needed for an education base and scientific research. What more could it want.

01

Transport: Located five kilometres to the east of Lintong, it is a must tour bus stop for the "one-day trip on the eastern route".

With Mount Lishan in the background, the Mausoleum of Qinshihuang (First Emperor of the Qin Dynasty, 221—207 B.C.) is like a stately hill. As soon as Qinshihuang assumed the throne, he mobilised over 700,000 labourers to build this mausoleum. The construction took 37 years. According to many historical records and legends, this mausoleum has been robbed five times. But investigation and surveys conducted today have proven it has not been touched by grave robbers. The underground palace built some 2,000 years ago is well-preserved.

Comment: In appearance, it is a huge square-shaped tower. But if you have learned about the historic status of the emperor, it can give a different feeling.



02

Transport: It is located 1.5 kilometres to the east of the Mausoleum of Qinshihuang (First Emperor of the Qin Dynasty). All large hotels as well as the Xi'an Railway Station provide shuttle buses for a "one-day trip on the eastern route" for tourists to visit the museum of the terracotta warriors and horses.

In March 1973, a peasant of Xiyang Village of Yanzhai Township discovered many strange objects while drilling a well in his field. After it was reported to the local administration of cultural relics, a team of archeologists was sent to the spot. Over the first year of excavating, they found an entire region of terracota sculptures, which had been buried deep in loess for over 2,000 years.

Comment: The discovery of the terracotta warriors and horses is an archeological and artistic miracle.

03

Transport: The ruins are located outside Banpo Village on the eastern bank of the Chanhe River on the outskirts of Xi'an. You may take bus No. 11 at the Railway Station or tram No. 105 from the Bell Tower and get off at the Banpo Ruins stop, then walk south for 50 metres to the entrance.

The Banpo Ruins are typical ruins of a village of the Yangshao Culture and date back 6,000 years. The Banpo Museum sits on the site covering part of the area of the primitive village.

Comment: These are genuine ruins of an ancient settlement of the ancestors of the Chinese people. Patterns and shapes of excavated earthenware here are extremely intricate and interesting.

04

Transport: Join the local tours organised by hotels or travel agents, or take the "one-day trip on the eastern route" bus at the Railway Station.

Huaqing Pool is renowned for its hot spring. As early as in the Tang Dynasty, Emperor Minghuang and Yang Guifei (Imperial Concubine) enjoyed themselves here. A few years ago a huge stone-carved bathtub used by Yang was unearthed here. Most gardens were built in the period when Empress Dowager fled to Xi'an as the Eight-power Allied Forces broke into Beijing. Chiang Kai-shek was detained here by General Zhang Xueliang and General Yang Hucheng on December 12, 1936, in what is known historically as the "Xi'an Incident".

Comment: A tour of the Huaqing Pool is a journey back into history. You may also enjoy a hot spring bath as Yang once did.

05

Transport: You may go there by bus No. 41.

The brick Dayan (Greater Wild Goose) Pagoda was built in the Tang Dynasty by the imperial house at the request of Xuan Zhuang, a renowned monk who had travelled to India and brought back many Buddhist scriptures. The monk housed all the scriptures in this pagoda. The structure is seven storeys high and 64 metres high. One may climb to its top up a spiral staircase inside the pagoda and enjoy a panoramic view of the southern suburbs of Xi'an. To the east of the pagoda is the Tang-dynasty Art Museum and an exquisite garden.

Comment: The pagoda is a Xi'an landmark. Square in shape, magnificent and substantial, it is a typical pagoda of the Tang Dynasty.

06

Transport: Bus No. 41 takes you directly there.

This is a large replica of a Qin-dynasty palace. Standing on both sides of the square in front of the palace are 12 "golden men statues" that include four ministers, four warriors and four dancers. They are robust and wear different expressions. To the east of the golden statues lies a row of bronze chariots pulled by larger than life horses.

Comment: Golden men statues of such a huge size are rarely seen in China. They are worth seeing and are not far from the Dayan Pagoda.

07

Transport: It is located one kilometre to the west of the Dayan Pagoda, and northwest of the junction of Xiaozhai Road East and Cuihua Road. Take bus No. 5, 14, 24 or 27 and get off at the Cuihua Road Stop.

It is said that this museum is No. 1 among all the history museums in China. Occupying an area of more than 70,000 square metres, it consists of a group of buildings styled like Tang structures. The central building displays all sorts of cultural relics unearthed in Shaanxi Province covering the 7,000 years from the Ape Man in Lantian to the late Qing Dynasty. The west wing has exhibits about the Silk Road and Yaozhou porcelain while the east wing's displays reflect cultural exchanges between China and foreign countries.

Comment: Eleven dynasties established their capitals in Shaanxi and because of this, cultural relics unearthed here are numerous and very valuable. Many are world-class treasures and are a must see.

09

Transport: From the Bell Tower, walk west along Xida Road for 500 metres. You may also take bus No. 1 or 43 or tram No. 101, 104 or 105 and get off at the Guangji Street Stop.

Also built during the reign of Emperor Hongwu, it is known as the sister structure of the Bell Tower. A huge drum sits on the top floor. There are two arched doorways one in the central north and the other in the central south at its base. Genuiune relics, souvenirs reproductions and imitation cultural relics are for sale in the Xi'an Cultural Store near the tower.

Comment: The Drum Tower is in the style of typical traditional Chinese architecture. The Curio Street and the Grand Mosque are located northwest of the tower. Not very far from here is a Muslim street with all kinds of delicacies for sale.

10

Transport: It is located in the centre of the Xi'an Ancient City. Bus No. 1, 3, 6 or 43, and tram No. 101, 102, 104 or 105 all go to the Bell Tower.

The Bell Tower stands at the junction of four streets leading east, west, south and north. It was built during the reign of Emperor Hongwu of the Ming Dynasty. In the past, the 2,500-kilogramme iron bell hung on the top floor and sounded to announce the time everyday. Its resonant sound could be heard throughout the town. The tower is a 36-metre high and sits on a square foundation. It has four arched doorways respectively facing the four entrance gates to the city.

Comment: This solid structure is an architectural masterpiece of the traditional style. Here one may have a look at the bell as well as scenes on the streets.

02

07

06

08

Transport: It is situated at the entrance of Fuxue Alleyway inside the southern city wall. To get there you take bus No. 14 or mini-bus No. 402 and get off at the northern end of Wenyi Road, then walk 100 metres in the direction of downtown.

It is the earliest site of stone steles in China and has the largest number of steles, hence its name. There are altogether 1,170 pieces displayed in six exhibition halls, six winding corridors and a pavilion. It is also a "palace of calligraphy". *Shan Bei* by Li Si of the Qin is carved in the seal writing style; *Cao Quan Bei* of the Han is in official script; *Xuanmita Bei* by Liu Gongquan and *Huangpu Dan Bei* by Ouyang Xun of the Tang are in regular script; *Qian Zi Wen* by Zhang Xu of the Tang is inscribed in cursive style.

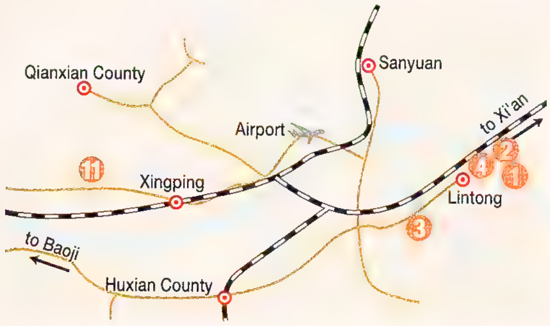
Comment: It is doubtless the largest museum in China of stone steles with many calligraphic masterpieces. Those interested in history or calligraphy will find this an ideal destination.

11

Transport: It is located at Makuipo in Xingping County. It can be reached by taking the bus for the "one-day trip on the western route".

The true name of Yang Guifei is Yang Yuhuan, a favourite imperial concubine of the emperor. She was strangled to death during the Anshi Rebellion (755—763).

Comment: It is not worthwhile to make a special trip to go there. However, you may get off the bus and have a look at it if you happen to pass it.



Photos by Li Shengli, Shi Baoxiu Article by Hu Jun

BAOJI

A PLACE OF ANTIQUITY

After visiting Xi'an, we drove to Baoji. Heading southwest, we passed over the Guanzhong Plain and arrived in Baoji after a little over two hours drive. There are many places of historical interest to see including the Lord Zhou Temple and Yandi Mausoleum.

Frankly, I knew little about Baoji before this trip and not many friends of mine have been there probably because it is dwarfed by Xi'an, the ancient capital of China over the centuries. It is therefore, neglected. I found Baoji to be a most impressive place. In fact, Baoji is a place of great antiquity with many spots of historical interest. Besides, it has beautiful natural surroundings. In my opinion, it ranks as one of the best tourist destinations not only in China but also in the world. Baoji and Xi'an are twin stars on the Loess Plateau.

Home to Emperors

According to historical records and excavations more than 5,000 years ago a tribe surnamed Jiang led by Yandi lived beside Qingjiang river to the south of Baoji. The tribe was later defeated by another tribe led by Huangdi from the east, but its manner of farming became the origin of the Yellow River culture. Yandi also known as Shennong (God of Farming) traveled widely, sampled all kinds of edible plants, discovered five grains, and discovered the earliest medicinal herbs. Unfortunately, he died tasting a poisonous plant. Later, he was commemorated the God of Farming, God of the Sun, and God of Medicine. Together with Huangdi, the tribe is regarded as the earliest ancestors of the Chinese nationality. Today, at Tiantai Mountain in Baoji, we can see ruins from ancient times like the vault of bones, the incense burning terrace, Baima (White Horse) Pass, and the Sun Market (ancient barter trade centre) of Yandi.

Even prior to the Tang Dynasty there existed Shennong Temple and Yandi Memorial Hall. Their ruins still exist today. A new memorial hall in commemoration of Yandi and Huangdi was built a few years ago in the Weibin Park of Baoji. People now come from all parts of the world to pay homage to those two forefathers. The Yandi Mausoleum is said to be located at the top of Mount Changyang to the south of the city. The memorial hall, an archway and stone sculptures of good and bad emperors have been built there recently.

On the seventh day of the seventh month every year since ancient times, a grand ritual ceremony is held to commemorate Yandi.

A Significant Discovery in Fufeng

Treasures which often stun the world are discovered from time to time in the vicinity of Baoji. One example is a discovery that took place in the Famen Temple.

The Famen Temple 10 kilometres north of the county seat of Fufeng was erected in the late Eastern Han Dynasty (25—220). It prospered in the Sui and Tang dynasties (581—907) and was regarded as the Royal Temple. In May 1987, a news release sent from Fufeng County shook the world. A pagoda in the temple was struck and destroyed by a thunderstorm. Revealed in the vault beneath the pagoda were the only known genuine relics of Sakyamuni, his finger bones. This unprecedented discovery ignited great excitement among Buddhists, archaeologists, and tourists around the world. It is regarded as one of the ten most important archeological discoveries in China in the 20th century, and major event not only in the history of Buddhism, but also in the history of world civilisation. This authentic relic was displayed in Taiwan not long ago. Hundreds of thousands of Buddhist followers knelt in the streets to greet the relic. They were so excited and moved that they were all in tears.

Zhouyuan Abounds with Cultural Relics and Ruins

Soon after leaving the Famen Temple, we drove to Zhouyuan. The

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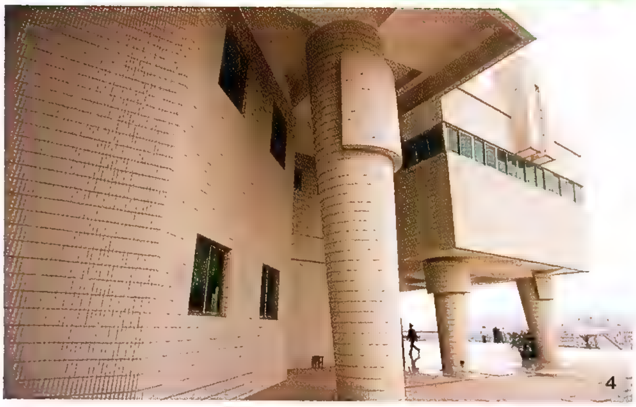
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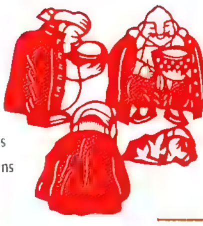
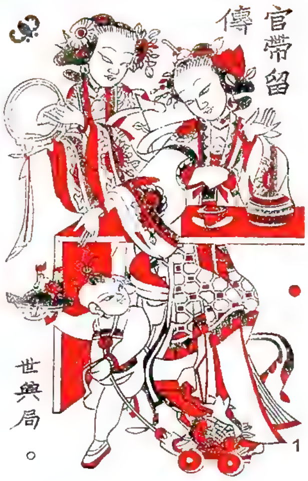
1. Painted figurines of the faces of a tiger and a horse. (by Shi Baoxiu)
2. The statue of Lord Zhou in the Zhougong Temple in Zhouyuan. (by Shi Baoxiu)
3. Zhou-dynasty jade bottles with handles shown in a museum. (by Shi Baoxiu)
4. The tripod overlook of the Bronze Wares Museum in Baoji. (by Shi Baoxiu)

No. 7 Oddity in Shaanxi:

Rice Bowls as Big as Basins

Farmers in Shaanxi like to gather under a huge tree at the entrance of their villages for supper. Each of them carries a bowl of food. What's odd is that the bowl is very big. Obviously they need large portions to fill their stomachs. People from South China wonder why Shannxi people use basins instead of bowls for their meal, for these bowls are as big as basins in a southerner's eyes





land of Baoji is split into many pieces by rivers and each piece has its own name. Historically, the loess land between the Weihe River in the south and the Qishan Mountains in the north was called Zhouyuan. The fiefs of the Zhou Dynasty (11th century B.C.—221 B.C.) and the lands of the early Qin State were all in Zhouyuan. During the Zhou and the early Qin, Zhouyuan prospered and was a metallurgy centre. Zhouyuan abounds with mysterious cultural relics and ruins. Discoveries of relics were recorded as early as in 54 B.C. during the Western Han Dynasty, and relics have been unearthed down through time. A friend of mine sent to do farm work in Zhouyuan during the Cultural Revolution (1966—1977) told me that the family he stayed with found a two-foot-long, one-foot-wide bronze ware while digging a winter vegetable cellar. Its surface had illegible scripts and it was rusty and worth nothing if sold, so they used it as a pig trough. One day my friend's father visited him at the village. His father was a learned man. When he saw the trough, he was flabbergasted. He said it was a bronze ware cultural relic dating back several thousand years. When he walked about the village, he found bricks of the Qin and tiles of the Han being used for laying walls of homes. Even a night stool was a piece of Han earthenware. No one knows how many treasures are buried around Zhouyuan. He told me he once kicked up a piece of bone needle in a field. Digging he discovered a piece of an ancient earthen pot. The four state treasures of the late Qing, the Maogong Cooking Vessel, Dayu Cooking Vessel, Guojizi Plate, Sanshi Plate, were all unearthed in Zhouyuan. The only museum in China specialising in bronze has been built. Among the collection of 50,000-plus pieces, half are bronze wares of the Zhou and Qin dynasties. Bronze wares regarded as state treasures can be seen here.

Another famous treasure in Baoji is the Chencang Stone Drum. This drum was unearthed during the early Tang and it dates back over 1,300 years. A valuable script of a hunting ritual ceremony of a Qin king was engraved on ten stone drums. They were proclaimed state treasures by rulers in history.

Legend of the Establishment of the Zhou Dynasty

While visiting Zhouyuan I was reminded of a legend about the Zhou Dynasty that says Jiang Ziya, or Jiang Taigong (Great Grandfather), was a man of great wisdom. Since youth, he had been hiding deep in the mountain valley of the Panxi River, Baoji, fishing with a hookless and baitless line. He was not fishing for fish, but for the person who could discover his talent and desired to overthrow the tyranny and established a new kingdom. Finally, when Jiang was 80 years old, he met the right person, Ji Chang, who invited Taigong to assist him in overthrowning the Shang Dynasty and create the Zhou Dynasty. Ji Chang became Emperor Wenwang. The impressions left by Jiang Ziya kneeling can still be seen on a huge rock beside the Panxi River.

After visiting the ruins in Zhouyuan, I passed the Qishan County seat and reached the Zhougong Temple. Zhou was kind to people and emphasised education. He opposed ruling the country by adopting heavy punishment, so he gained the admiration of the people. The temple is located in a basin surrounded by three mountains. The south side directly faces Mount Taibai and Wuzhangyuan. Enshrined inside are statues of Lord Zhou, Jiang Taigong, Lord Zhao (Lord Zhou's younger brother), and Houji (the ancestor of the Zhou people).

2

Wuzhangyuan, a Place of Strategic Importance

Baoji serves as a communication hub for the four large cities of Xi'an, Chengdu, Lanzhou and Yinchuan. One also has to pass through here when going to Southwest and Northwest China, particularly traveling to Sichuan. Since ancient times it has been a place of strategic importance. Many famous battles took place in the vicinity of Baoji. One famous battleground is Wuzhangyuan.

During the Three Kingdoms Period (220—280), Zhuge Liang, military councellor of the Kingdom of Shu, stationed his troops in Wuzhangyuan to confront Sima Yi. Unfortunately he died in Wuzhangyuan of overwork. His death here made Wuzhangyuan a renowned city, and for generations people of letters, officials and others came here to put up stone steles carved with inscriptions, and build temples to commemorate the statesmen.

It was drizzling the day I arrived in Wuzhangyuan. Looking at the Zhuge Liang Temple, I could not help admiring this man who fought countless battles to safeguard the Kingdom of Shu and who died at work in Wuzhangyuan. He wrote famous articles entitled *Qianhou Chushi Biao* (Former and Latter Expedition Statements 前後出師表).

Calligraphy of those two articles was written by Yue Fei, a royal general of the Song Dynasty (960—1279), in memory of Zhuge Liang, and it was also carved on the steles. Both are regarded as national heroes in China.

It was still cool up in the Qinling mountains in April. Railroad workers wearing their cotton-padded coats. We followed an ancient winding road and reached Dasanguan pass drenched in sweat. Over our heads was an ancient plank road by the cliff face. The pass was so narrow that only one person could pass. On both sides were sheer cliffs. An old saying goes: One man can hold out against 10,000 at a strategic pass. More than 70 battles took place here in history. Who knows how many human bones and weapons lay buried beneath our feet.

No. 8 Oddity in Shaanxi:
Spicy Dish a Must

Shaanxi people like a large variety of high quality wheat rolls and buns. They are not particularly keen on main courses. However, chili is a must for each meal. And they like to eat an extremely hot chili called "Qin jiao". When entertaining a guest, no matter how simple the meal might be, a plate of pan-stirred chili or a dish of chili powder in oil is a must.

A Seesaw War Between Zhuge Liang and Sima Yi

According to *San Guo Zhi* (*History of the Three Kingdoms*), in the spring of 234, Zhuge Liang changed the routes to the former four campaigns against the Kingdom of Wei. He attacked and occupied the Xieyu Pass, a strategic place on the Shu (Sichuan) Road. Then the troops headed west and took Wuzhangyuan. There, they erected tents, and tilled the land, as if they were about to have a protracted war.

Sima Yi, marshal of the Kingdom of Wei, knew well that the reason Zhuge Liang had failed in the previous campaigns against the Wei was because his army was short on grain. This time, though Zhuge Liang had changed his tactics and transported grain by using wooden oxen and horses with wheels which the troop could hide inside, there was still a limit of the quantity of grain. So Sima Yi was in no hurry to fight. Zhuge Liang, though a wise man, was so engrossed in work that he fell ill and died in the eighth month that same year in Wuzhangyuan at the age of 54.

1. A traditional New Year's picture sold in Baoji. (by Shi Baoxiu)
2. The new stupa in Famen Temple is built on the base of the old palace. (by Shi Baoxiu)
3. Browsing the Baoji city from the Jiacun Plain. (by Shi Baoxiu)
4. Wuzhangyuan, the place where fierce battles happened in Chinese history. (by Li Shengli)
5. Cave dwellings can be seen everywhere in Fufeng County. (Chan Yat Nin)
6. The temple built in memory of Zhuge Liang who died in Wuzhangyuan. (by Li Shengli)

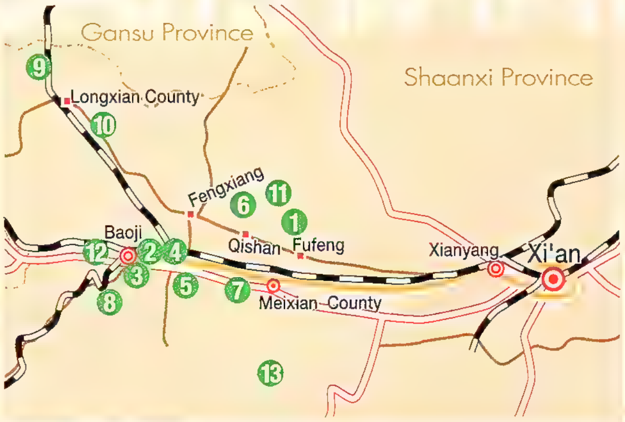
MAJOR TOURIST SPOTS IN BAOJI

01

Transport: Take one-day bus trip from Xi'an or Baoji.

The Famen Temple is located in Famen, 10 km north of the county seat of Fufeng. It is 120 km west of Xi'an and 90 km east of Baoji. This town is one of the most ancient towns in the Guanzhong area. The Famen Temple is famous for the discovery there of the finger bones of Sakyamuni. Since the Tang Dynasty, it has been known as the "sacred place of Buddha's relics".

Comment: It is a must-see. Structures in this temple preserve the Tang architectural style.

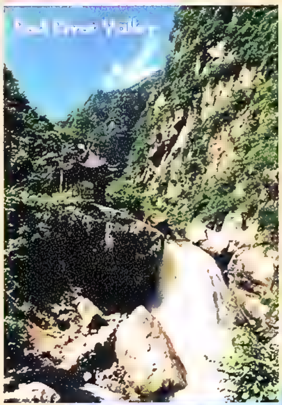


02

Transport: Take bus No. 2 or 6 or a sight-seeing bus from Xi'an.

It is located on Mt. Changyang in the suburbs of the city. Surrounded by cypress and pine trees, the mausoleum is stately and somber. Here are also the large Yandi Memorial Hall, an archway, the Bell Tower, the Drum Tower and the Yandi Museum. There is a 100-metre long walkway From the Yandi Memorial Hall to the mausoleum lined with stone statues of emperors of the past generations.

Comment: Mount Changyang is magnificent. The statues of the emperors are lifelike.

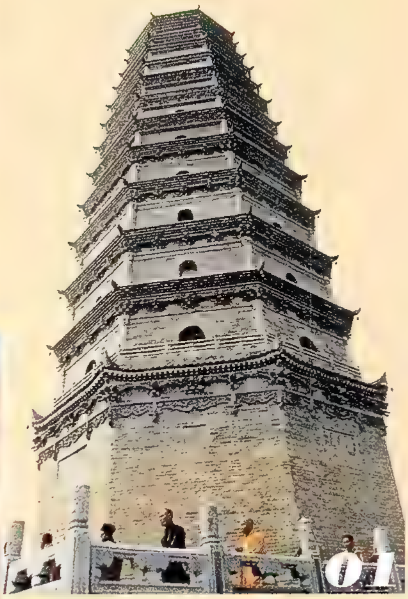


03

Transport: Take bus No. 4 or 9.

There have been several Yandi Halls in the history of Baoji, but most have collapsed. In 1992, another Yandi Hall was built in downtown of Baoji. In style of the Qin and Han architecture, it stands on a high foundation. The statue of Yandi in the hall is an object of worship. Murals showing Yandi's achievements and inscriptions by celebrities hang on the walls. During the Qingming Festival every year, a grand ceremony is held here in memory of this legendary figure.

Comment: If you want to learn more about Yandi, God of Farming, you should go there. The exterior of the structures are of a unique architecture.


01

09

04

Transport: Take bus No. 8 or 9

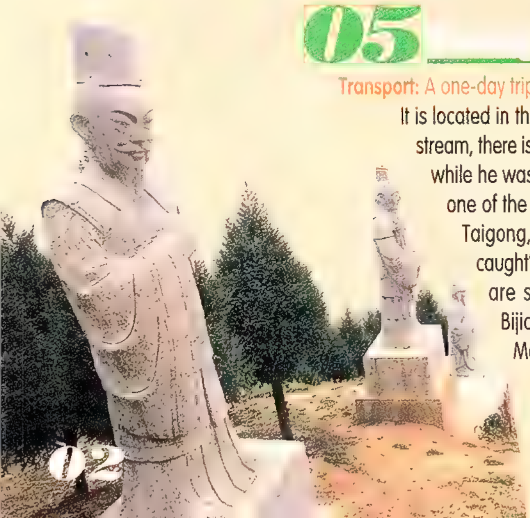
This is the only museum in China specialising in bronze wares. It is located on the opposite side of the People's Park. A tablet of five vessels is symbolic of the ancient bronze civilisation of Baoji. The principal structure is 10,000 square metres in size and has five stories. The museum contains the main exhibition hall, temporary exhibition hall, conference room, cultural relics store and offices. The whole structure is clean, unique and majestic. Displayed in the principal exhibition hall are bronze wares unearthed during the past scores of years, including Hezun Wine Vessel, Weibei, Weiding Cooking Vessel, Lord Qin Bell, hoe, iron sword with gilt handle, all of which are all rare treasures.

Comment: Housing a large number of state treasures it is worthwhile visiting.

05

Transport: A one-day trip bus from Baoji takes you there directly.

It is located in the valley of the Panxi Stream in Tianwang Town of Baoji County. In the stream, there is a huge rock said to be the fishing terrace where Jiang Ziya came to fish while he was a hermit. Later he became an outstanding statesman, strategist and one of the founders of the Western Zhou Dynasty. The saying "fishing like Jiang Taigong, who cast a hookless and baitless line for the fish that wants to be caught" (ask for willing victim or collaborator) originates from this story. Nearby are several beautiful scenic areas including the Jingshi beauty spot, Bijiashan, the Golden Ripple Gorge and the China Western Region Film Making Base.



06

Transport: Take a one-day trip bus from Baoji.

Situated eight kilometres north of the county seat of Qishan, it is the largest group of extant ancient structures in Baoji. The temple proper in a thick grove of trees has more than 30 ancient structuresand occupies an area of seven hectares. All the structures are symmetrical and well composed. The halls are majestic and the pavilions and kiosks are exquisite. In the compound are many stone steles and stone carvings. It abounds with ancient trees planted in the Han, Tang, Song, Yuan and Ming dynasties. A grand ceremony is held annually around the 12th day of the third month of the lunar calendar. It is also a hot tourist attraction.

Comment: The ancient buildings and stone carvings are of high value. It is worth visiting.

07

Transport: Take one-day trip bus from Baoji.

It is located at the northern end of Wuzhangyuan in Qishan County. It is skirted by two rivers on eithr side and faces the Qinling Mountains to the south. An ancient road known as Baoxie passes nearby. Wuzhangyuan was where Zhuge Liang died, so it attracts a lot of tourists. There are places of historical interest, but also some new things to see, the best known pf which is Xieyu Pass Reservoir, also known as the No. 1 Dam of Asia. It is 114 metres high. On top the dam, one can view ancient battle grounds and the large expanse of water at the foot of the dam.

Comment: The temple stands on top of Wuzhangyuan, lofty and magnificent.

08

Transport: If you drive on the Hanzhong Highway take the Dasanguan Pass Exit. It can also be reached by taking a one-day bus ride from Baoji.

The Dasanguan Pass is one of the four famous passes in Shaanxi. Located in a ravine of the Qinling Mountains in southern outskirts of Baoji, it is flanked by sheer precipices. It has been a strategic point since ancient days, and has witnessed more than 70 battles down through history.

Comment: Reminising on historical events in a place like this creates a feeling of nostalgia.

11

Transport: Take a one-day bus trip bus from the railway stations in Xi'an or Baoji.

Zhouyuan is situated in the west of the Guanzhong Plain, in the counties of Fufeng and Qishan. The capital of the Zhou Dynasty was located here. This area has yielded the largest number of bronze wares. No wonder it is known as the "Home of Bronze Wares". An exhibit of bronze wares of the imperial house of the Western Han is displayed in the Zhouyuan Museum. Reproductions of cultural relics unearthed in Zhouyuan are available for sale as souvenirs.

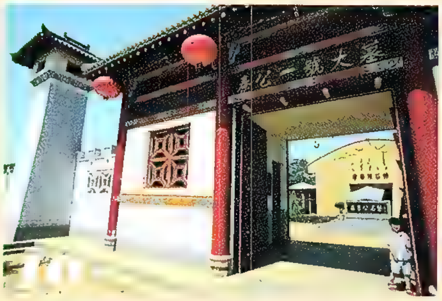
Comment: There are a great many art masterpieces to be seen in this area.

12

Transport: Take a taxi in Baoji to get there.

Sitting halfway up Lingyuan Mountain north of downtown, it ranks first among the three local Taoist temples (the other two being Yintai and Yutai). Built in the late Yuan and early Ming, it was where the famous Taoist priest Zhang Sanfeng practiced Taoism. The temple stands on a high place and its buildings are magnificent. It is one of the best historically nteresting spots in this area. Its buildings are symmetrical along its axis. You can see the Jade Emperor Chamber, Hall of Three Pristine Ones, the Octagonal Pavilion, Sanfeng Cave, and other buildings. From the Jintai Temple is a panoramic view of Baoji. There is also an exhibit hall displaying cloth art, colourful painted clay figurines, masks, shadow play figurines, and more.

Comment: It is a quiet place where you get a panoramic view of the whole city. There is a rich variety of folk art and crafts.



12

13

09

Transport: Take a bus from Baoji to Longxian County, then change to a mini-bus that goes straight to the Longmen Cave.

The Longmen Cave was known as Lingxian Rock in ancient times. It is 1,800 metres above sea level, and located in Xinji Township in Longxian County, 35 km from the county seat of Longxuan. In the late Song and early Yuan, a renowned Taoist priest named Qiu Changchun came here to practice Taoism and set up a sect known as Longmen. The cliffs look like they have been cleaved by a chopknife. Some of the vertical cliff walls are over 200 metres high. This temple is built across the mountain which is extremely lofty and grotesque.

Comment: The cliffs here look grotesque and are abrupt. The temple seems to be in a more scary aspect than Xuankong Temple in Shanxi.

10

Transport: Take a bus from Baoji to Fenyang and get off at Zhihui Town.

The No.1 Grendat Tomb of Lord Qin is the largest tomb and the only one excavated in the Cemetrey of Lord Qin. The plan of this tomb is in the shape of "中" (middle). It is 300 metres long and has an area of 5,334 square metres. It consists of a central chamber and two corridors to its east and west. A museum exhibiting artifacts from this tomb is nearby a is the first museum built by farmers in China.

Comment: The open tomb pit is huge in size. The appearance of the original tomb can be seen in the museum. It is worth seeing.

13

Transport: Take one-day trip bus in from Xi'an or Baoji to the foot of the mountain, change to the shuttle bus operating within the Tourist Area to get to the cable car station, then take the cable car up the mountain.

The Taibai Mountain National Forest Park is located in Tangyu Town of Meixian County. It is bounded by the ridge of Taibai Mountain in the south and stretches to the Guanzhong Plain in the north. The mountain is 620—3,500 metres above sea level. There are eight scenic areas on the northern and southern slopes: Honghe Red Cliff, Xieyu Pass, Ancient Maple Retreat, Taochuan Winding Stream, Ping'an Sea of Clouds, Taibai Pearl, and Boxian Peak. In 1998 the Park built a passenger cable way to make the journey easier for tourists.

Comment: The mountain is covered by thick forest and wild azalea; and the mountaintop is full of grotesque rocks.

Remarks: The best season for climbing this mountain is July and August. Warm clothes, raincoat or umbrella are essential. The mountain can be climed either by the northern side or the southern side. To ascend the northern slope, set off from Meixian County, go to Yingtou and then begin climbing. Another choice is to go first to Xieyu Pass climbing up via Yinggezhui. The southern slope is rather gentle. There are two routes here too. One may set out from Zhouzhi and start climbing at Houbuzi. The other way is to go from Zhouzi to Houbuzi going past Dudumen and Taibai Temple and then start up the mountain.

XI'AN-BAOJI DOMESTIC DELICACY STREETS

An area with a long history must have some wonderful traditional delicacies. This is particularly so in Xi'an and Baoji of Shaanxi Province. It has been a customary since ancient times for Shaanxi people to stay where they can enjoy the easy life. So they seem to pay more attention to their food than the people of Henan, Gansu and Shanxi do. Many delicacies have been handed down from their ancestors. During my trip there, I thoroughly enjoyed those delicacies and can still remember their aroma and taste.

Braised Buns in Beef and Mutton Soup (*Yangrou Paomo*)

After appreciating the terracotta warriors and horses of the Qin, friends invited me to try a snack called "steamed bread socked in mutton soup" in a restaurant known as Old Sun Family's Restaurant, also known as "First Bowl Under Heaven". At the sight of the huge bowl of mutton soup, I was afraid I couldn't finish it. But once I tasted it, I wondered if there was enough. The mutton was tender and the soup creamy and it had a wonderful aroma. I broke steamed bread into the soup and then scooped them into my mouth. Only after finishing did I noticed other diners broke their steamed bread slowly and leisurely into tiny bits. By that time, I had already emptied my bowl.

There is an interesting story around this delicacy. Before Zhao Kuangyin became emperor of the Song Dynasty (960—1127), he loitered in Chang'an, penniless. He came to a beef and mutton shop. The owner took pity on him and offered him a bowl of piping-hot mutton soup. He took out a bun, broke it into pieces, and soaked them in the soup. He quickly ate the bread and gulped down the soup. He thought this was the best food he had ever had. After becoming emperor and still missing the bread in mutton soup, he took his ministers and generals to the shop. They loved the delicacy and gave a big tip to the shop owner. I don't care if the story is true or not, I thoroughly enjoyed the atmosphere of Shaanxi eating mutton soup with the local opera Qin Qiang being performed in the background.

No. 9 Oddity in Shaanxi: **Shouting While Singing Arias**

The local opera of Shaanxi is called "Qin Qiang" ("Qin" is an ancient word representing Shaanxi Province). It is probably the oldest opera in China. If it is your first time to see Qin Qiang performance, you must be mentally prepared for the loudness. When "hualian", or painted face, in the role of a general or warrior, comes on stage, he gives a loud shout, which is rather frightening. The Painted Face using his normal voice shouts at the top of his lungs.

Qishan Noodles with Minced Meat (*Qishan Saozi Mian*)

The Qishan noodle with minced meat gravy I had in Baoji is also wonderful. When we finished visiting the Lord Zhou Temple, we were hungry and went to a Qishan noodle shop. The owner brought us bowls of piping-hot noodles with meat sauce. The thin, smooth noodles are really different. The sauce over the noodlles is finely minced meat, mixed with beancurd, day lilies and edible black fungus. Drops of hot chili oil floated on the surface of the soup, and it had brown meat cubes, white beancurd, yellow scramble slices, and green leafy vegetables. How could not we be greedy?

The gravy makes Qishan noodle delicious. According to the locals the meat should be minced, mixed with all sorts of condiments, particularly, pepper powder and vinegar, then cooked over a slow fire until thick. When ready, the minced meat is dark brown and tastes delicious. Besides it can be kept for quite a long time.

Seafood Bottle-Gourd Head (*Hulu Tou*)

This is steamed bread spread with sliced pig intestine and vermicelli and made into a soup. Why is it so delicious? The key is how the soup is made. First, smash pig bones and boil them in water until the soup is creamy. Then add a fat hen and some condiments. Spread slices of pig intestine and vermicelli neatly over slices of steamed bread, then pour the soup over them many times. Lastly sprinkle them with finely chopped spring onion and spices. They are now ready to serve. Legend has it that one day Sun Simao, a famous doctor, went into a Chang'an (then Xi'an) restaurant to eat buns. He found them smelly and greasy. He knew the way they were not made right, so he gave the owner a few tips and offered him a gourd with condiments. Ever since, the snack has sold well. To show his gratitude, he hung the gourd at the gate and called his snack Gourd Head.

Rice Paste (*Liangpi*)

Liangpi is very popular in Xi'an and Baoji. Streets and allies are full of shops and stalls selling it. No wonder people say, "Ganzhou is noted for its guokui, Qishan its noodle. Liangpi of Qinzheng is on Chang'an Street." The chic city women love this snack. They eat it with little manners burying their heads in it and eating until their cheeks turn red and oily. Liangpi made in Qinzheng goes back 200 years. Meticulous care is given in selecting rice to be ground into flour. Liangpi is thin, fine and soft. No wonder people are so found of it.

No. 10 Oddity in Shaanxi:

Squatting Instead of Sitting on a Chair

Farmers in Shaanxi like gathering under a huge tree at the village entrance for supper with their large bowls of food in their hands. There are no chairs or stools, so they squat on tree stumps, rocks or simply on the ground. In time this has become a habit. At home, they might take off their shoes and squats on a chair while talking to visitors. When watching local opera, they squat on a stool. Don't be alarmed if you happen to see a person squatting on a bench in the waiting hall of a railway station in Shaanxi. Its no wonder the people in the neighboring province of Henan, call Shaanxi people "the local monkeys"

Qishan Pancake (*Qishan Guokui*)

Qishan guokui is as large as a cauldron, Emperor hence its name. It is said to have appeared as early as the time of Zhou Wenwang, and is also called "Wenwang guokui". Qishan is famous for this crisp, white, snack. Its sides are thin and its centre is thick and bulging. It is filling.

Buckwheat Noodles (*Qiaomian Hele*)

Buckwheat noodles of this type go back 600 years. It is dark, tastes good and is refreshing. The noodles made of fresh buckwheat flour are fine, fragrant and tasty. It is served hot in winter and cold in summer.

Old Tong Family Cured Mutton (*Laotongjia Layangrou*)

Tender and aromatic, the Tong Family's cured mutton has been made and sold for over three generations. Made of bony mutton, it is processed by salting, boiling over a big fire first and then a slow fire, smoking and drying. The condiments include salt, sodium sulfate, cinnamon bark, anise, and Chinese prickly ash.

Translated by Wang Mingjie

1. **Savouring delicacies in Xi'an is a highlighted programme in the trip. (by Shi Baoxiu)**
2. **Qishan pancake is as big as a wok. (by Shi Baoxiu)**
3. **People enjoying the food at the Spring Festival temple fair. (by Li Shengli)**
4. **Cured mutton of the Huis. (by Shi Baoxiu)**

FUXI
ZIN
FUXI
WANG

Know-Alls in Xi'an

◆ **Local Customs:** Xi'an people are the most typical of the people in Shaanxi. The local customs are unique after being handede down for thousands of years. Generally, Xi'an people are honest and sincere, and do not pretend to be friendly. If you meet a local who is particularly hospitable, be wary of his or her intentions. Sometimes they speak vulgar language just to show familiarity, and It is better to ask elderly people for directions.

◆ **Language:** Most people in Xi'an speak in Xi'an accent, although quite a lot of them speak Henan and Mandarin. The tone of the domestic Xi'an language is quite heavy because it contains lots of falling tones. Tourists from other places may think the locals are quarrelling, whike in fact, they are just talking leisurely. Xi'an people usually use concise word-phrases combinations of three to five words in their conversation. In addition many ancient Chinese words are still used in their conversation.

◆ **Climate:** Xi'an has four distinct seasons and winter here is rather cold. January is the coldest month, with an average temperature 13°C. Summer is white-hot, especially in July when temperatures climb around 27°C or at maximum 40°C. March to June, or August to November are the best travel seasons.

◆ **Dining:** The dining facilities in Xi'an has greatly improved in recent years. A great many local snack stalls have opened. Restaurants featuring Shaanxi area cuisines, such as Qishan, Huinan, Hanzhong, and Yan'an, have opened enmass in Xi'an. The Hui Peoples Food Street near the Drum Tower, antique restaurants in Dongda Street, hotels and chain food shops all offer a large variety of delicacies.

◆ **Communication:** The usual telephone fee is collected on every call, while the cost of long-distance call within China is charged in six seconds incrinements. Tourists can only use IDD services in some hotels, communication offices or postal offices. IC telephone booths are easily found in Xi'an, and handles calls within Xi'an and the entire country.

◆ **Accommodation:** There are 20-plus four or five star hotels and as many hostels and guesthouses in Xi'an dedicated to receive about 10 million tourists from home and abroad every year. DIY travellers are adviseded to stay in cheaper hotels. In lower star-rated hotels, a standard room costs about 120 yuan per night.

◆ **Transport:** Public vehicles can reach almost all the scenic spots in Xi'an, though this transportation may be time-consuming. The taxi fare is very cheap and it costs five to six yuan starting off, and 1.2 yuan more per an additional kilometre.

◆ **Remarks:** In recent years, beggars and thieves from around Xi'an and otherplaces have gathered outside the Xi'an Railway Station. On arrival at the station, therefore, it is best to leave the as quickly as possible.

Festivals in Xi'an

Xi'an is an ancient city having a time-honoured history. The domestic festivals are also magnificent.

Lantern Fair: The fair is held on the 5th and 15th days of the 1st month outside every ancient city gate and around the Dayan (Greater Wild Goose) Pagoda in Xi'an. Exquisite lanterns made in the townships of Xi'an are displayee

Local opera performance: On 15th day of the 1st month, the event is held at the Xingqing Park. Artists in the opera troupes perform, stilt walk, and do difficult acts.

Chrysanthemum Festival: This is held before and after the Double Ninth Festival, in which thousands colourful chrysanthemum of various kinds are exhibited.

Xi'an Ancient Culture Festival: Held in the 9th month, it is a tourist highlight that includins local opera, stilt walking, ground boat, bamboo horse, dragon and lion dancing, and a local handicrafts exhibition. Flower and lantern exhibits are held at night.

China Terracotta Warriors & Pomegranate Festival: Held in September, there are many cultural and entertaining performances with a pomegranate fruit theme.

Travel Routes in Xi'an

2-day tours in downtown Xi'an: Dayan (Greater Wild Goose) Pagoda, Xiaoyan (Lesser Wild Goose) Pagoda, Bell Tower, Drum Tower, the Forest of Steles, Xi'an City Wall, Xingqing Palace, Mosque, Qinglong Temple and Shaanxi History Museum

1-day tour in eastern Xi'an: Qin-dynasty Terracotta Warriors Museum, Huaqing Pond, Banpo Museum

1-day tour in western Xi'an: Famen Temple, Maoling Mausoleum, Tomb of Imperial Concubine Yang, Zhouyuan Bronze Museum

1-day tour in northwestern Xi'an: Qianling Mausoleum, Zhaoling Mausoleum, Xianyang Museum, Yangling Mausoleum and Tomb of Princess Yongtai.

2-day tour in Mount Huashan: Mount Huashan, Xiyu (West Sacred Mountain) Monastery, Ming-Qing-dynasties Residence Village, Longmen at Yellow River, Confucius Temple, Tomb of Sima Qian

1-day tour in southern Xi'an: Xingjiao Temple, Dugong Temple, Mount Cuihua, Tomb of General Yang Hucheng, Zhashui Limestone Cave Scenic Area.

2-day tour in southwestern Xi'an: Louguan Terrace, Car and Horse Trough of Western Zhou Dynasty, Xiangji Temple, Caotang Temple.

4-day tour in northern Xi'an: Tomb of Huangdi (Yellow Emperor), stone carvings on Mount Medicine King, Yan'an-the Sacred Base of Chinese Revolution, Hukou Waterfall on the Yellow River and Loess Environment and Social Customs.

Know-Alls in Baoji

◆ **Transport:** Transport in Baoji is extremely convenient. This is where the Longhai Railway and Baocheng, Baozhong railways intersect. Eleven trains depart from here and 31 trains (from Beijing, Shanghai, Hangzhou, Chengdu, Chongqing, Guangzhou, Kunming, Taiyuan, Yinchuan, and Urumqi, etc) stop in Baoji daily. There are good highways connecting Baoji with Xi'an, Xianyang Int'l Airport, and Tianshui in Gansu Province. There are four passenger terminals in Baoji, where hundreds of buses set off to different counties and scenic areas. The bus terminal at Jichang Street (east of the railway station) provides buses for one-day tours in Baoji.

◆ **Accommodation:** Among the 36 hotels in Baoji, eight are three-star and seven are two-star.

Festivals in Baoji

Chinese Lantern Festival : In the ten days before and after the 15th day of the 1st month is the most jubilant period in Baoji. Deafening beating drums, music, waving flags, and different kinds of cultural performances (as called "Shehuo" in Chinese) reflecting old domestic traditions can be appreciated everywhere in the town. Outside Baoji, magnificent cultural performances can be watched in Longxian County, Fengxiang, Qishan, Qianyang, and Meixian County.

Ancient Temple Fair at Zhuge Liang Temple: Held in Wuzhangyuan in late second lunar month, people gather to worship Zhuge Liang, a famous military counsellor during the Three Kingdoms Period.

Worshipping Emperor Yandi: During the Qingming (Pure Brightness) Festival in the 5th month, people gather and worship Emperor Yandi, believed to be the first ancestor of the Chinese nationality, at the Yandi Shrine. Residents of Shennong Town in Baoji worship in the Mausoleum of Yandi.

Temple Fair at Lord Zhou Temple: In the middle of the 3rd month, is a grand temple fair held at the Lord Zhou Temple in Qishan County. A spring production exhibit is also held concurrently.

Buddha's Birthday: The event is held on the 8th day of the 4th month at Famen Temple. The programmes include sutra chanting, worshipping the Buddha's relics, cleaning the pagoda, and production exchange fair.

Flower-and-Snow Festival on Mount Taibai: In the time around the 1st day of the 5th month, the event is organised by Mount Taibai National Forest Park.

Death Anniversary of Emperor Yandi: Legend has it that in order to find a treatment for curing human diseases, Emperor Yandi died after mistakenly eating a deadly herb called "Duanchangcao", on the 7th day of the 7th month. Today, on the same date, a series of local worship activities is held.

Travel Routes in Baoji

One-day and two-day tours are organised by local travel agencies, while transportation is operated by the Baoji Baolian Tourism Vehicle Corp.

1-day tour in downtown Baoji: Baoji Railway Station, Mausoleum of Emperor Yandi, Dasan Pass, Yindong (Silver Cave) Gorge and the source of Jialing River

1-day tour in northeastern Baoji: Mausoleum of First Qin Emperor Museum, Fengxiang East Lake, Lord Zhou Temple and Famen Temple

1-day tour in southeastern Baoji: Diaoyu (Fishing) Terrace, Wuzhangyuan, Mount Taibai Forest Park

2-day tour in northern Baoji: Guanshan Grassland, Longmen Cave and Mount Jingfu

3-day tour in eastern Baoji: Fishing Terrace, Wuzhangyuan, Mount Taibai Forest Park, Famen Temple, Lord Zhou Temple

1-day Baoji Local Art Tour: Domestic Art Gallery of the Baoji Public Art Museum, Baoji County Li Jiyou opera facial makeups, Fengxiang Paper Workshop Domestic Handicrafts Art Centre, Spring Festival pictures in Nanxiaoli Village, Guodian Township, Fengxiang County

2-day Buddhist Culture Tour: Linyouci Buddhist Temple Grottoes, Famen Temple, Lingshan Temple in Fengxiang

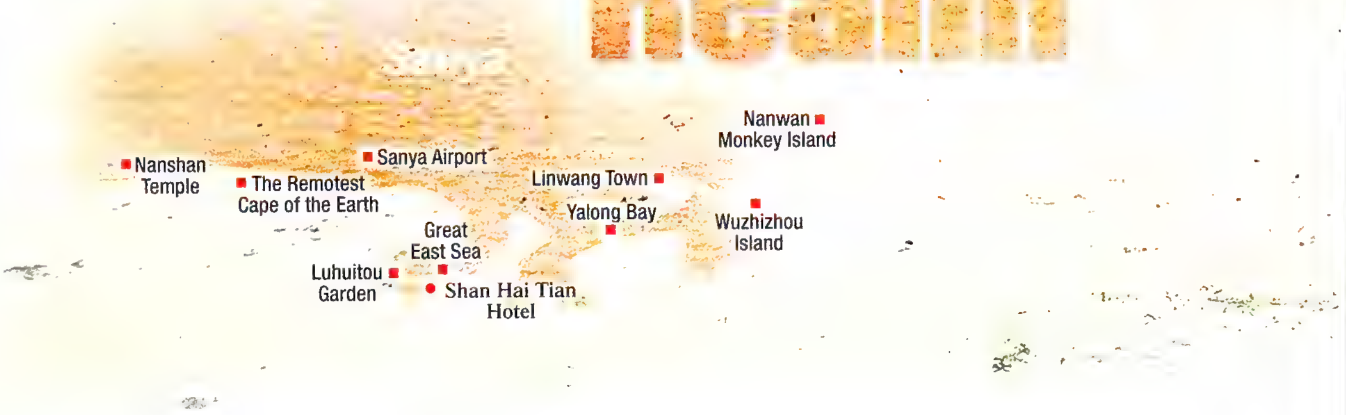
4-day Archeological Tour: Baoji Bronze Wares Museum, Mausoleum and Museum of First Qin Emperor, Famen Temple Museum and ruins of Zhouyuan

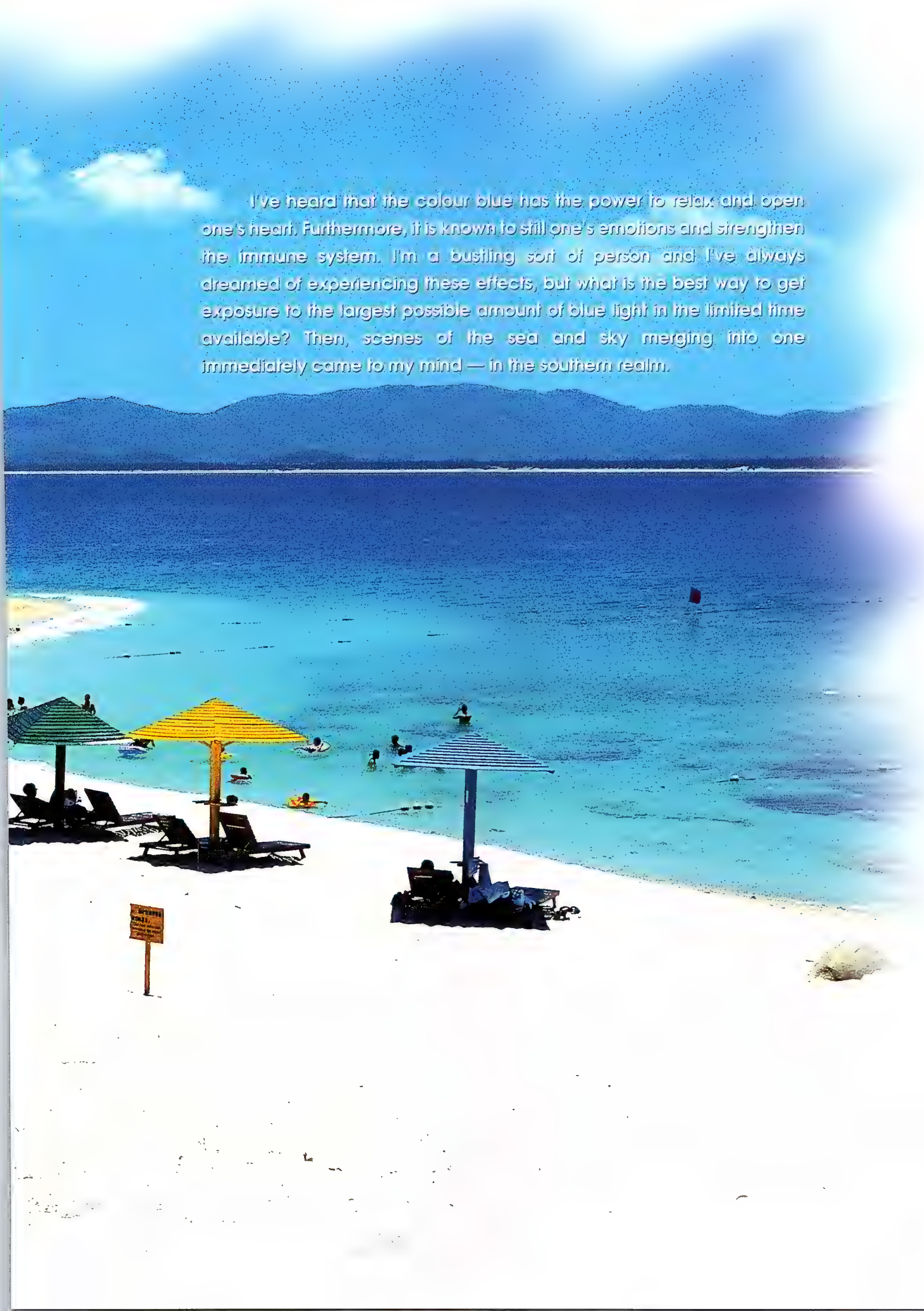
2-day Explorative Tour: Touring the highlands and limestone caves in the Mount Zibo Scenic Area in Fengxian County.

* All dates are in accordance with the Chinese lunar calendar.

In the Southern Realm

Photos & article by Sea Blue


Sanya
Nanshan Temple
Sanya Airport
The Remotest Cape of the Earth
Linwang Town
Nanwan Monkey Island
Yalong Bay
Wuzhizhou Island
Great East Sea
Luhuitou Garden
Shan Hai Tian Hotel



I've heard that the colour blue has the power to relax and open one's heart. Furthermore, it is known to still one's emotions and strengthen the immune system. I'm a bustling sort of person and I've always dreamed of experiencing these effects, but what is the best way to get exposure to the largest possible amount of blue light in the limited time available? Then, scenes of the sea and sky merging into one immediately came to my mind — in the southern realm.

1

It takes only an hour to fly from Hong Kong to China's southernmost province, Hainan Island. An express shuttle or a taxi from the airport to the hotel takes another half hour. At your hotel you can take in the panorama of the sea from the balcony of your spacious guestroom. Beneath the sun roll endless waves under an azure sky, and along the coast you can see swimming pools surrounded by coconut trees. It is a view made in heaven.

Staying in a Five-Star Hotel

I decided to stay in the five-star Shan Hai Tian Hotel so that I could fully immerse myself in the tranquility of Sanya. Built on the shores of the Great East Sea, the hotel is advantageously located near the city centre and the ocean beaches. It is also the very first environmentally friendly hotel to be built on Hainan Island.

Entering the hotel, I was immediately captivated by the view of the sea through the huge windows of the lobby. The lobby utilises natural sunlight, which saves electricity. On other floors of the hotel, the illumination from the corridor lights is just adequate. Though some may claim the intensity of this light is too stingy or "mean" for such a high-class hotel, I appreciate the resolute environmentally aware spirit. A light on the ceiling came on when I enter my room. It only turned on when someone walked into the room. The desk light is also modern and it has no switch. Its brightness is completely controlled by body heat. Touch it longer and it becomes brighter. It's really cool. The glass balcony door and the air-conditioner are interactive. When the door is opened the a-c turns off automatically. A mini clothes-drying machine in the bathroom dries clothes using heat from the hair-dryer. My vest dried within ten minutes. I was amazed by all these facilities.

2

Exotic Recreational Activities

Tourists visiting Sanya today can enjoy a great diversity of aquatic sports on the Great East Sea, as well as go for strolls along the promenade or fish from the end of it. The Shan Hai Tian Hotel also organises rock-climbing for travellers, which is the latest addition to the Hainan Island tourist program.

Tasting Delicacies

There are restaurants offering authentic Korean food and western taverns in the hotel. Since I was reluctant to leave the

Previous page: Wuzhizhou Island is a not well-known coral reef paradise.

1. Shells in different shapes are the least expensive, natural souvenirs.

2. Lovers sitting on the coast of the Great East Sea in Sanya.

3. Coconut trees, white beaches, and crystal-clear water can all be found on Wuzhizhou Island.

4. The luxury hotel offers you an excellent view of the sea and sky.

3

1

view of the sea, I went to an alfresco Chinese eatery for meals the whole day. During the day it provides inexpensive delicious Hainan dishes. I ordered four dishes including Fried Shrimp with Orange Juice, a Spiral Shell with Red Chillis, Fried Fresh Vegetables, and Stewed Rice in a Coconut Shell, which altogether cost only 50 yuan! At night there is a BBQ buffet (68 yuan per person). One can talk leisurely with friends after dinner in a nearby bar, or enjoy freshly made barbecued diced meat (only one yuan per string!) sold on the beach. I had a wonderful time!

Exploring the Coral Island

The pamphlets in the travel agencies always describe the enchanting islands around Hainan like Monkey Island and West Island. My destination this time was Wuzhizhou Island, a newly developed scenic spot that is still not well-known to travellers. It is located 30 kilometres northeast of Sanya city centre, and is famous for its unpolluted, pristine, colourful coral reef. It attracts diving buffs and TV crews.

To save time, I took a 20-minute taxi ride from the hotel to the No.2 pier at Tielu (Iron Stove) Harbour in Linwang Town (Fare: 83 yuan). It took me only 10 minutes to go by speedboat from the pier to Wuzhizhou Island (Admission ticket: 40 yuan; boat: 60 yuan).

Approaching the island in the boat, the crystal clear seawater more than 20 metres in depth caught my attention. The seawater reflected a blue light that city dwellers can't even imagine, and it touched me to my heart. Fish of many colours and shapes swam about. All this beauty appeared unreal under the navy blue sky. I lost all capacity for holding onto the stresses of city life. I was completely in a holiday mood.

2

My First Dive

As I walked up the coast, I saw the pier for practicing diving. There was a long queue of excited people waiting on the pier. I certainly did not hesitate to try it (247 yuan per person). I dressed in diving gear and learned some simple signals used during diving following the instructions from a handsome and physically fit coach. Ten minutes later, I went into the water. Since it was my first dive, I admittedly was nervous. Unconsciously, I held on tightly to the coach's hand. He gave no special response, but began singing pleasantly. As we gradually dove 10 metres deep into the sea "hand in hand", I saw numerous marine organisms whose names I'll never know. My only regret is I was afraid to dive to the bottom of the sea and missed my chance to have my picture taken with the coral reef.

3

The coach said encouraging words to me, but I did not change my mind. And the "world between two of us" came to an end after a half hour.

Besides diving, one can also try snorkelling, diving from a sightseeing boat, fishing, beach motorcycles, banana boats, powerboats, and paragliding. If you feel tired, go for tea in a coastal restaurant.

5

Baptised by the Colour of Blue

After my dive I walked for about five minutes and reached a beach with very soft sand and pure, clean seawater. Parasols in eye-catching red, blue, yellow, and green colours were set up on the beach. There were very few tourists and each of them was enjoying in their own way. Some lay restfully on the beach taking an afternoon nap, or swam in the shoals, or were picking up shells from the sand. In a flash I jumped into the water and was absolutely drenched in the cerulean sky and sea in this realm of southern China.

Translated by K. W.

1. **Stewed rice in a coconut shell served by the Shan Hai Tian Hotel is inexpensive and delicious.**
2. **Diving in the sea off Wuzhizhou Island is an unforgettable experience.**
3. **Tourists enjoy their holiday on the Island in their own way.**
4. **Huts for resting erected on the coast.**
5. **There is a barbecue for tourists where one can appreciate the night view on the Island.**
6. **The Sanya Shan Hai Tian Hotel.**

Tips for the Traveller

Transport

- Hong Kong → Sanya
  Time: 1 hour; Return tickets: HK$ 2,060
  Package (flight tickets and hotel fees): HK$ 1,880.
  For more information, please inquire at Hong Kong China Tourism Travel Service.
  Tel.: (852) 2561 9228
- Sanya Airport → Shan Hai Tian Hotel
  Free express shuttle; Taxi: 50 yuan, about 20 minutes.
- Shan Hai Tian Hotel → Wuzhizhou Island
  Taxi (metred flag-down price): 83 yuan. For the return trip, the price can be negotiated with the taxi driver before getting in the car.
- Hired vehicle: One day in Sanya: 150~200 yuan. Price will be higher if going to far places. Hiring a car is much more economical than always taking a taxi and saves time over taking the buses.
- Buses No, 2 and 4 run continuously along the east and west Great East Sea coasts on the Island. Tour bus No. 102 goes directly to Yalong Bay. Another tour bus goes to scenic areas like The Remotest Cape of the Earth (Tianya Haijiao) and Nanshan Temple. Fare: 3~8 yuan.

Recommended Hotels

Shan Hai Tian Hotel *****
Add.: Luling Road, Great East Sea, Sanya, Hainan Island.
Tel.: (898) 882 11688
Website: www.shthotel.com
Price of guestrooms: are offered from inexpensive mansion-style guestrooms located on the hill for around 100 yuan to President suites costing over 5,000 yuan per night.

Many star-rated hotels are established along the coast in Sanya. Though their prices may be higher than at the hotels in Sanya city centre, they offer beautiful views and are located close to the beaches. If you prefer staying in hostels, they have guestrooms at inexpensive prices and are close to the beaches. I suggest the Red Coral Youngster Hostel (Add.: Luling Road, Great East Sea; close to Shan Hai Tian Hotel). Twin-bed room: 150 yuan. Another option is Wuzhizhou Tourist Village. The price of guestrooms ranges from 300 to over 1,000 yuan. Website: www.wuzhizhou.com.cn

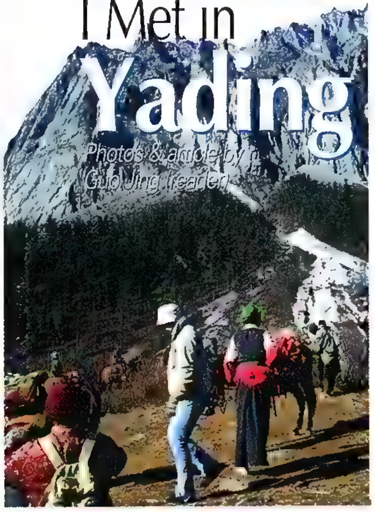
Other Options

- Besides Wuzhizhou Island, one can also consider visiting West Island, which has motorcycles, aquatic sports facilities such as water-bicycles, powerboats, and diving gear. However, there are no hotels and tourists can only spend the day on the island.
  The Shan Hai Tian Hotel is offering a special package tour from now to the end of this October. The package includes twin-bed room at the Garden Rooms: 1,318 yuan / 2 nights; and a tour to West Island for two.
- If you want a tour guide, we suggest you join the direct-flight tour organised by the Hong Kong China Travel Service. The tour includes scenic spots in Haikou and Sanya: Wugong Shrine, Tropical Ocean World, Nanshan Culture District, The Remotest Cape of the Earth, Limiao Village, Great East Sea, and Luhuitou Garden. (Inquiry: Hong Kong China Travel Service; Tel.: 852-2853 3715)

SANYA SHAN HAI TIAN HOTEL

The Shanghai Woman I Met in Yading

Photos & article by Guo Jing, reader



Yading, a nature reserve situated in Daocheng, West China's Sichuan Province, was packed with tourists during the one week May 1 holiday this year.

My friend and I were fortunate to get written permission to go to a scenic area in Yading after the highway closed at six o'clock. The following day we arrived at the Luorong Cattle Pasture located in the county centre earlier than most other tourists. We grabbed the chance to take pictures of the snow-capped mountain while only a few people walked about, and left there that afternoon.

Returning to Longlongba, the tourist base camp, the driver Xiao Li said to me quietly, "I have to drive a Shanghai lady back to Daocheng. She has lived here for a month. Please come with us and talk to her on the way." When I got into the Mitsubishi, I found a young woman who looked only a little older than 20 sitting quietly in the back of the car.

Our car jolted along slowly the twist mountain road. After Xiao Chen, an official sent by the county government, had fallen asleep, I talked with the Shanghai woman.

"Have you stayed here for a whole month?"

"I came here with two American women in April. There weren't any tourists or buses then, and I lived with a Tibetan family in Yading Village."

"How much did they charge you to stay?"

"They did not ask for money, and regarded me as a member of their family. We drank butter tea and ate barley cakes together every day. I even helped them build their house."

"Have you seen the snow-capped mountains?"

"Yes, I have. I followed the Tibetans to make a circuit around Mount Xiannairi."

"How long did that take?"

"We walked for 13 hours. Most of the time, we were 5,000 metres above sea level. Tourists always see the backside of the mountain. In fact, the face of the mountain is more beautiful."

"How many people went along to circle the mountain?"

"Three of us. One was a villager and another was a technician from Guangdong Province. He has a great deal of interest in Buddhism, and has now gone to the Wuming Buddhist Institute in Seda. He wants to be a monk."

"Were you tired after all that walking?"

"Really tired, because the mountain road is very long and it is about 5,000 metres above sea level and we had to walk fast enough to return to the camp site before nightfall."

"Have you made a circuit around the Meili Snow Mountain in Yunnan yet? It is more beautiful there."

"The technician was there and made a circuit. He said the snow on Mount Xiannairi is cleaner and reflects a green light."

"What is your occupation?"

"I'm a nurse. I've used my pregnancy holiday to go for a trip before. It was quite embarrassed to have such a big abdomen."

"Why did you travel alone?"

"I have grown used to that. I have travelled alone since I was in third grade of primary school. I've been to lots of places. Once I drove a car by myself to Inner Mongolia."

"Where do you like it most?"

"It's difficult to say. Every place is unique. I feel very good about Wuyuan in Jiangxi, where it is peaceful and pleasant."

"Do your parents worry about you?"

"They give me a lot of freedom. I have inherited my dad's character, who loves to travel. My daughter is like me, very active. I believe she'll be like me in the future."

"Why not stay longer in Yading?"

"It was too crowded the last few days, which made it inconvenient to go sight-seeing, but I cannot waste time staying indoors everyday. Before I left, the 'zhaba' (monks) in the village prayed for me the whole day and placed a sutra on my head to bless me."

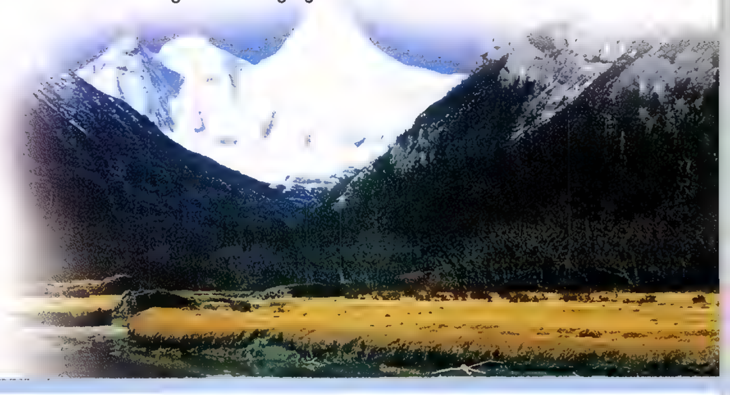
"Do you know which sect do they belong to?"

"I didn't go there to conduct a survey, why should I know that? All I want is peace, and I only brought with me a simple camera rather than a professional one."

Compared to her simple answers, my tone seemed too pedantic. I did not ask her any more questions during the last part of the journey. Instead, I looked out the window. Snow was falling lightly. We all got out of the car and took pictures of it, except for her. Without taking out my camera, I only looked at the Mount Xiannairi in the distance. Truly, there was a bright green light near the peak of the mountain.

Turning down the slope, I heard her excited voice say suddenly, "Look, all the trees outside are green! The mountain was still bare at the time I arrived!" Having stayed a month in Yading, she was a witness to the changes here. One month later, the colours of the nature had changed before her, and she saw the differences that others were unable to see.

It was already six o'clock when the car arrived at Daocheng. She picked up her knapsack and walked away alone. Only then did I realise that her clothing and belongings were all black.



The Ten-Mile Red Trousseaux in Ninghai

Photos & article by Kristy Wong

As recommended by the locals, we four, from Beijing, Ningbo, and Hong Kong, departed from the Ninghai County centre for the unfamiliar Dajiahe Town. Upon arriving in the town, despite the "welcoming" of a dog's barking, we failed to find our target. Just as we stopped in front of a dried bamboo fence and had almost decided to give up, a friendly lady, her hair in twin plaits, came towards us from behind the fence. She told us that the building within was the South China Folk Art Museum, better known as the "Ten-Mile Red Trousseaux" among the locals. We had not missed the target after all.

Magnificent Red Trousseaux — Dignity of the Bride

In the refined gallery under a tender yellow light, pieces of wooden red-and-gold carvings or red lacquerware with gold leaf are displayed. The historical background of some of them is outlined by a black-and-white photo and a brief description posted alongside. Mr. He, the owner of the gallery, introduced everything to us patiently. In feudal China, parents of the bride would try every means to prepare the most plentiful trousseaux for their daughter. It was the most direct way to express their love for her, and most importantly, a token of the wealth of the bride's family.

Areas around Ningbo and Shaoxing were the birthplace of red lacquerware in Zhejiang Province. Most trousseaux were composed of red lacquerware, with red signifying luck and joy in the Chinese tradition. These trousseaux, therefore, were called "hongzhuang", or "red trousseaux". The red colour came from natural red lacquer, called "ruby" by some foreigners. The golden colour was made from pure, 24-karat gold. In richer families, the parents would even endow their daughter with a large piece of farmland. Such a parading scene was known as the "Ten-mile Red Trousseaux".

In fact, the red trousseaux contained almost everything the bride would need during her lifetime. They included compartments for infants or milk, the shelf used for foot-binding, needlework articles, dressing table, mirror box, washbasin, washstand, coat hanger, and toilet articles, and even the wedding sedan and "gong xiang", the carrier with handles on both sides used to hold the trousseaux. But most splendid of all were the beds. An old saying in Ningbo goes: "Half of one's lifetime is spent on the bed." They put high importance on making the beds. When a daughter grew up, her parents built a specific "Lady Bed" for her. When she had made an engagement, the parents made a new bed for her. Since this bed was extremely luxuriously made, it was called "Qiangongchuang", or "Thousand-workdays Bed". It was a delicacy of red-and-gold woodcarving.

Lattice Windows and Doors — Essence of Ancient Architecture

Leaving a world of red, we followed Mr. He to see his collections of lattice windows and doors, or "Menchuang Gezi" as he called them.

Lattice windows and doors were previously built for the dual purpose of decorating the house and guarding against thefts, with the first aim always more important than the latter one. By using various types of wooden tenon, elegant and complex patterns are formed. To a certain extent, they embody the spirit of ancient Chinese philosophy.

Many lattice windows and doors incorporate patterns of waves, waterweeds, water splashes, and fishes. As explained by Mr. He, antique Chinese structures were highly susceptible to fire. Therefore, people created patterns related to water to assuage themselves psychologically. Meanwhile, well-educated citizens or government officials in the Ningbo-Shaoxing Plain also participated in the design of some windows and doors. The subsequent patterns reveal the poetic sentiment and cultural background of these scholars.

Apart from the items exhibited in the museum, I mostly appreciated its founder, Mr. He Xiaodao. Having a particular fondness for the Ningbo-Shaoxing culture, He, who is from a local family, has been researching and collecting relics and articles of these two particular categories for over 20 years. Though the ages of the "Ten-Mile Red Trousseaux" and "Mengchuang Gezi" are no longer to been seen, their glamour continues to shine today because of some dedicated enthusiasts.

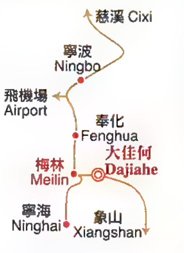
Travel Tips

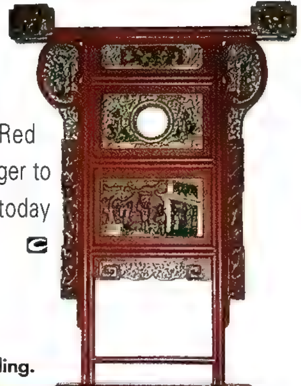
Since the Jiangnan (South China) Folk Art Museum is not open to the public and is still under construction, there is no regular opening time. Interested parties are suggested to visit it during the day.

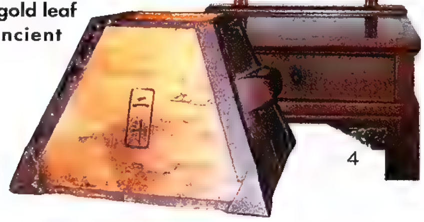
Tel: (574) 6515 8199

Add: Dajiahe Town, Ninghai County, Ningbo City, Zhejiang Province

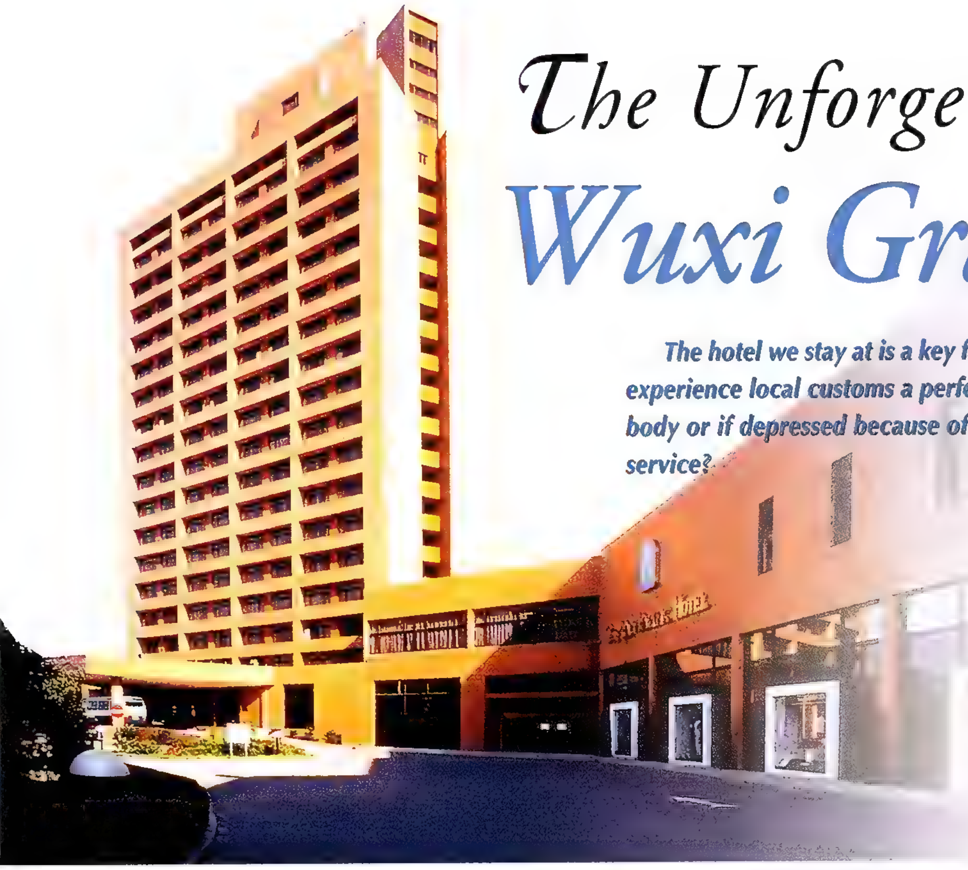
Ningbo Airport —(1.5 hrs)— Ninghai County centre —(1/2 hrs)— Dajiahe Town —(10 mins)— ask the locals







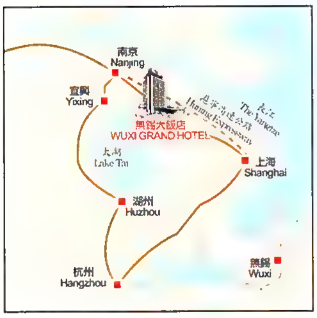
1. A wooden window with elegant pattern.
2. Even a vase is exquisitely made.
3. Wine bottles are always "VIP" at a Chinese wedding.
4. Red lacquer coat hanger with gold leaf reflects the luxurious of ancient trousseaux.
5. A stylish rice container.



The Unforgettable Wuxi Grand Hotel

Article by Zoe

The hotel we stay at is a key factor in making a trip to enjoy scenic beauty and experience local customs a perfect one. How can one enjoy a tour with a weary body or if depressed because of an uncomfortable environment and poor hotel service?



A year ago, I toured to Wuxi, a city known as the "Lesser Shanghai" in Jiangsu Province. Its scenic spots, such as the expansive Taihu Lake, exquisite Liyuan Garden, spectacular Lingshan Giant Buddha, picturesque and history-old Xishan and Huishan mountains, as well as the celebrated Wuxi CCTV Film & TV City made a deep impression on me. However, my most unforgettable experience was the Wuxi Grand Hotel.

On the first day in Wuxi, I was unfamiliar with the land and people there. For convenience and ease of transportation, I chose to lodge at the Wuxi Grand Hotel located in the city centre. As soon as I entered it I knew I had made the right choice. Opened in 1989, the Wuxi Grand Hotel is among the first group of four-star hotels established in China, and it has won the Best Hotel Award for three years in succession from 1994 to 1996. As a joint-venture hotel serving foreign guests, it boasts a state-of-the-art design, efficient facilities, and service of the highest standards. The pleasant environment made me feel at home.

The hotel has more than 300 rooms of several different kinds. The standard room I stayed in, for example, is well equipped with central air-conditioning, a bathroom, refrigerator, small bar, and long-distance phone service, not to mention the cosy atmosphere and beautiful decorations. The colour TV receives satellite programming in 23 languages including Chinese, English, Japanese, German, Italian, and Korean. It must be hard for tourists who stay in this hotel to feel lonely!

I am a critical diner, and I regard a delicious meals a very important part of any itinerary when I take a journey. My hotel is always my first opportunity to savour local dishes. And I was overjoyed by the quality of food offered by the Wuxi Grand Hotel. Among the many mouth-watering domestic dishes served in the Xi Shan Yuan Chinese Restaurant, I especially remember the famous Wuxi steamed spareribs. Moreover, the Hai Tian Lou Chinese Restaurant offers authentic, delicious cuisine from Beijing, Sichuan and Guangdong. My stomach was full so I did not have room left and had to pass up the appetising foods prepared by famous chefs in the Sakura Japanese restaurant and the International Brasserie.

I had a good sleep after eating well and had a wonderful time staying alone in the hotel. In a rainy day, I wasn't in mood to go outdoors and after being encouraged by the hotel staff, I changed into a swimsuit and jumped into the hotel's outdoor swimming pool immersing myself in the refreshing water. Afterwards, I exercised by bicycle riding and running in the fitness room. Then, I went for a sauna and let the sauna master relieve all my tiredness with a good massage. I had a really fine day.

I am also pleased with the advantageous location of the hotel. Standing on the bank of the Nanjing-Hanzhou Canal, the hotel is just one kilometre from the ferry pier. When the hotel attendant told me I could make a downstream cruise along the canal to Suzhou, an ancient city known as "Venice of the Orient", my heart leaped with excitement!

Wuxi Grand Hotel
Rating: ★★★★
Add: 11 Liangqing Road, Wuxi City, Jiangsu Province, P. R. China
Tel: (510) 580 6789 Fax: (510) 270 0991
Website: http://www.panpacific.com
E-mail: wx.pwgh2@public1.wx.js.cn

During my stay in the Wuxi Grand hotel, I talked with Mr. Hui Yongxin, the hotel's General Manager, which further increased my understanding of the hotel's secret to success.

Zoe: What is the operation philosophy of the Wuxi Grand Hotel?

Mr. Hui: The Wuxi Grand Hotel has its own enterprise philosophy. We believe we can be strong only when we are confident, develop our business only when there is a win-win situation between the company and staff, and be in business long term only if we are honest. The win-win concept is the core concept. Last year, we put a lot of effort in establishing and developing the hotel's philosophy and basing it on win-win activities, which has significantly increased our business. The hotel has won over the market and guests, and has a great reputation. As a result, the hotel staff works smoothly while increasing their income and compensation. They are more considerate while serving the customers.

Zoe: What is your perspective about hotel service?

Mr. Hui: In fact, the difference between hotels is not in regular service, but in the details of services. The former is easier to achieve. But fine service is different. It requires great solicitude, family style service, and catering to the needs of customers of various ages, occupations, and religious and cultural backgrounds. We focus on individual service. It is not a mistake for a hotel to not provide fine service, but the level of satisfaction will be greatly increased if it does so. Since fine service is not rigid and mechanical, it is difficult to standardise. It all depends on the overall quality and creativity of the staff themselves. As the managerial staff of the hotel, we have to create an environment in which every staff person is given free rein to their own ability and talent, therefore creating a successful enterprise.

Zoe: How was the business of the hotel in past year?

Mr. Hui: Last year, there was a 14% increase of the room occupancy (standard guestrooms); a 26% increase in the number of guests received; a 60% rise in profits; and over 10% increase in staff's income. Among the guests, 80% were expatriates, and 80% of them were business travellers. We received almost no complaints about the hotel. All these figures indicate that Wuxi Grand Hotel has won the confidence of most guests, including the most critical ones.

Zoe: Have you set any new expectations for your staff this year?

Mr. Hui: Early in 2002, I set three aims for the staff: to improve morality, courtesy, and civility. These are the most important elements for receiving and building a good relationship with foreigners. We strongly encourage that whatever position a staff person has, they not only have to do a satisfactory job, but they have to have excellence and maturity. Only mature staff can create a mature enterprise. In the keen market competition today, only a mature and cultured enterprise can be successful and attain the hoped for results.

General Manager of the Wuxi Grand Hotel Mr. Hui Yongxin in Jichang Garden, built in the Ming Dynasty (1368 — 1644) in Wuxi.

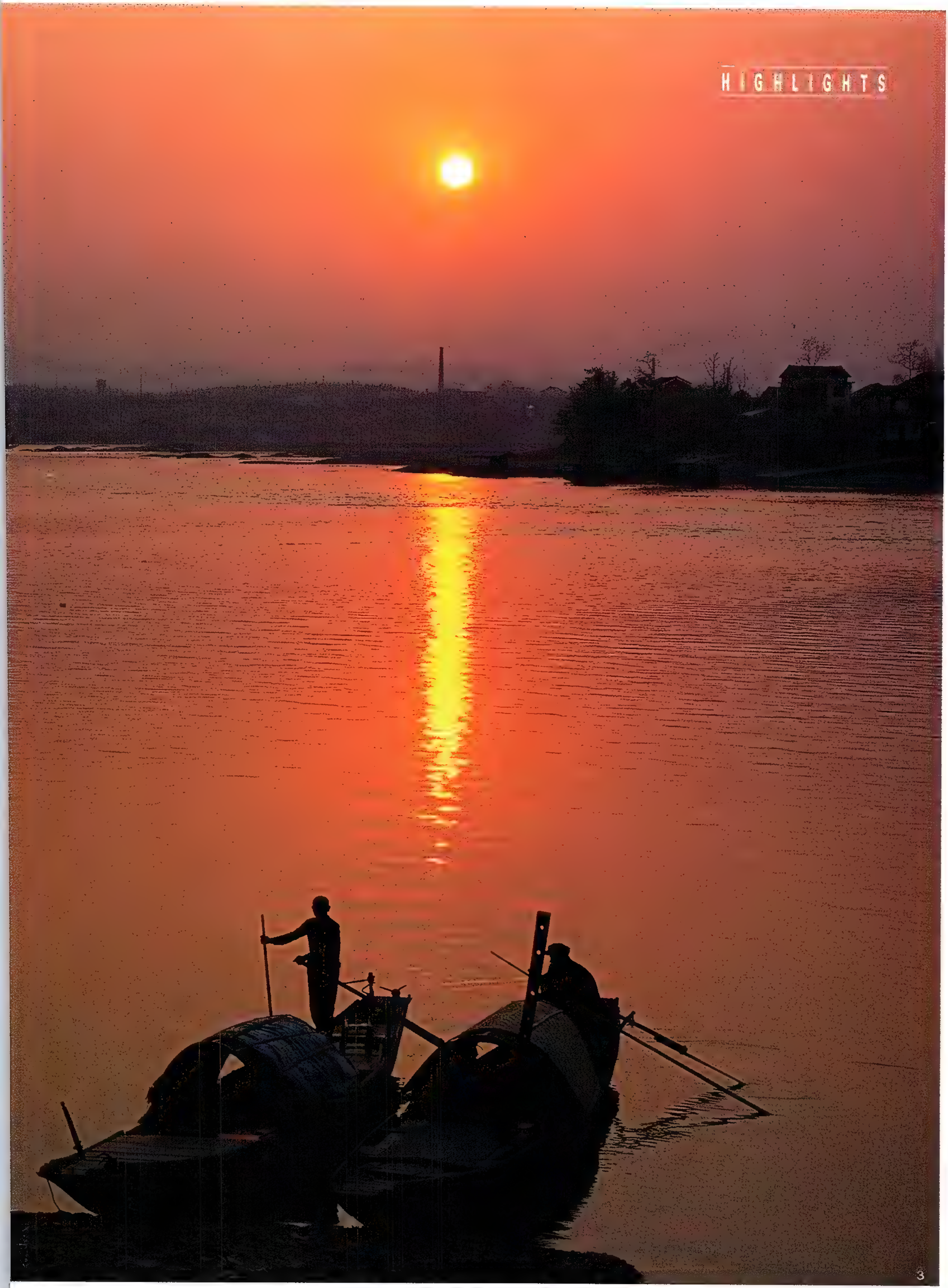
Journey to the Taohua River

Photos & article by Shan Xiaogang

Zishui River has its source in southern Hunan's Chengbu Miao Autonomous County. With a total length of 653 kilometres, it ranks third of the four major rivers of Hunan. There are numerous places of historic interest and scenic spots along the river. The most famous is the Taohua (Peach Blossom) River. It is famed for the beautiful women who live along the river.

The Taohua River became famous throughout Southeast Asia in the 1930s from a popular song titled "Home of Beautiful Girls Along the Taohua River". It is said that when Mr. Li Jinhui, the lyric writer, studied in the State Advanced Teaching College in Changsha, there was a beautiful young woman in his class who came from the Taohua River area. She invited him to tour her native town. They wandered for many days along the river in the blossoming peach orchards. Li regarded the trip an unforgettable trip of a lifetime and never forgot it.

2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Fuqiu Mountain: Floating in Sea of Cloud

There are two famous mountains ranges along the Taojiang River. One is the Fuqiu Mountains with 48 jagged peaks. It lies 12 kilometres to the southwest from the river. The peaks are lofty and imposing on clear days. On rainy days, they appear to float in the misty clouds, hence the name "Fuqiu"(Floating Hill).

On top the highest peak is the ancient Fuqiu Temple said to be built during the Northern and Southern Dynasties (420 — 589). It was a Taoist temple at first. later during the Tang Dynasty, it changed into a Buddhist temple.

When we entered the gate of this modest ancient temple, several huge thousand-year-old gingko trees immediately caught our attention. The one to the right side had a hollow trunk large enough for a man to enter.

We saw a two-metre-long slab of limestone mounted in the front of the seat of a statute of Buddha in the temple. Engraved on it are four large characters "Yinxin Shiwu" (印心石屋) (Stone House for Self-reflection). They were inscribed by Emperor Daoguang of the Qing Dynasty (1616 — 1911) in praise of Tao Shu, Viceroy of Liangjiang (Hunan and Hubei provinces) who was famous for his honesty. Suspended beneath the eaves of the hall in the front yard was another limestone slab, which sounded like a bronze bell when struck with a mallet.

Xiunu Mountain: A Supine Beautiful Girl

Xiushan is the other famous mountain range in Taojiang. It rises to the north of Zishui River and is opposite the Fuqiu Mountains and 15 kilometres to the northwest of the county seat. It has seven peaks arranged east to west and looks like a beautiful woman lying face up, who has just stepped out of her bath. Xiushan has the popular nickname — Xiunu (Shy Maiden) Mountain.

We took a boat down the "Taohua River". The water of this section of the Zishui River looks like green jade and the spray from our boat against the stone banks was as white as snow. The rugged mountain gorge on both sides now and then gave way to broad fertile rice fields. Peach trees in bloom appeared occasionally, and wild grass grew on the banks and by the courtyards of the houses. Further down stream, we passed Hengkou, the famous shoal on Zijiang River. The river's course suddenly changed direction there and the current became very swift. The wild and surging waves tossed the boat wildly up and down, and the passengers shouted shrilly during the wild ride. We managed to return to the county seat safe and sound.

Where a Famous Patriotic Poet Once Stayed

After breakfast the next day, we went to Fenghuang (Phoenix) Hill to look for the footmarks of Qu Yuan, a famous minister and patriotic poet born in the Spring & Autumn Period (770 — 476 B.C.), who is commemorated during the Dragon-Boat Festival today. Coming closer, we saw the signboard of the Taojiang County People's Government hanging by the main gate. We realised then the place had been turned into the seat of the county government.

Under the shadow of an ancient tree on top of a hill was a platform with balustrades. We noticed the platform was covered with a thick layer of fallen leaves indicating not many people had visited here recently. Called Tianwentai (天問台) (Heaven-Inquiry Platform), it was the site where Qu Yuan wrote his famous poem *Tianwen* (Inquiry About Heaven). Legend has it Qu Yuan built a straw shed and lived here for years. Burdened with his concern about the safety of the state and livelihood of the people, in his famous poem he raised more than 170 questions, seemingly directed to heaven. He asked questions like "What is wrong in the nine prefectures under heaven? Why do the rivers and streams overflow their banks? The water flows to the east continuously, what is the reason?"

A huge bird shaped rock projects out over the water from the steep cliffs below the Heaven-Inquiry Platform. It is believed to be the spot where Qu Yuan fished and meditated. Many times he stood there for a long time. Raising his head, he asked all sorts of questions of heaven and earth expressing his discontent with the rulers of the State of Chu. A statute of Qu Yuan sits against the cliff at the site anouncing the location of "Qu Zi (Yuan) Platform".

Further north along the river, an ancient pagoda was built half way up the hill in the memory of Qu Yuan.

Because of slanderous attacks by the emperor of the State of Chu, Qu Yuan was exiled to Taojiang County. He first took residence in a mountain basin living in Huayuan (Garden) Cave. It is in valley encircled by mountains eight kilometres from the present county seat. Friends local to the area invited me to pay a visit. At the mouth to the valley there is a small stone arched bridge leading to their village. One of my friends told me that it was the famous Sanlu Bridge (named for the fact that Qu Quan served for a long time as a minister in Sanlu).

Hongshan: A Sea of Bamboo

Driving more than 20 kilometres from Yiyang to Taojiang County, the expressway suddenly turned to the right into a vast mountainous area overgrown with thick groves of bamboo. We immediately guessed we had entered the "Bamboo Sea of Hongshan", which the local Taoshan people think should be at least as famous as the Sea of Bamboo in southern Sichuan. Covering an area of over 3,000 hectares, the sea of bamboo has numerous lush green bamboo groves. They grow so densly that they look like a vast sea of green waves tossing about in the wind.

In the Bamoo Observation Tower below the Bamboo Observation Platform is the Bamboo Sea Museum. Specimens of varieties of rare bamboo and bamboo products are on display. I learned from the exhibits that there are many different kinds of bamboo, including mottled bamboo, arhat bamboo, solid bamboo and square bamboo. Moreover, bamboo can be used to meet many needs, and is used for food, clothing, transportion and recreational pursuits. What impresseed me most was the fashionable bamboo clothing. Each clothing article costs several thousand yuan. Bamboo provides many othe products including bamboo shoots for food and paper. The local artists use the roots, branches and leaves of bamboo in their artwork.

As we walked out of the bamboo sea exhibition, a local farmer invited us to lunch. He showed us to his traditional timber frame house with a corridor in front common in the local area. Because of many years of weathering, the house looked rather old. From the ceiling of the corridor hung many bamboo lanterns and there were character couplets made of red paper on both sides of the door. The house was surrounded by a bamboo fence and dozens of strings of freshly made bacon hung from it. His house stood against a hill covered with lofty bamboo, and its front faced a clear mountain stream. No wonder they are known as the "families in the land of bamboo".

When we were served lunch we found that the courtyard was behind the house and was surrounded by natural hill cliffs. Surrounded by the fragrant bamboo and wild flowers, the hosts served us home raised chicken, home-made bacon, fresh fish from the river, fresh "green" bamboo shoot, locally cultivated rice, and homemade liquor. Ho could anyone in from the city imagine people could lead such a "heavenly" life?

Previous page:

1. **Houses of local mountain people in the shade of flowering peaches.**
2. **East of the Tangshi Village, a wide and spacious veranda has been built to provide shelter for visitors.**
3. **The beautiful Taohua River beside which the great poet Qu Yuan of the State of Chu lived in exile.**

1. **Braving the swift current and dangerous shoals can be very exciting.**
2. **The gate of Fuqiu Mountain, a scenic spot on the Taohua River.**
3. **Yaolong (Leaping Dragon) Pagoda built in memory of Qu Yuan half way up the slopes of Fenghuang (Phoenix) Mountain.**
4. **The gate of Fuqiu Monastery, which was built in the Southern and Northern Dynasties.**
5. **Quiet Changhe (Long River) Street in Santangjie, an ancient town by the Zishui River.**

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Fish and Geese of Hongyan Lake

Hongyan Lake is a medium-sized reservoir amidst the massive mountains some 10 kilometres north of the Anhua County seat. Setting out from the county seat we drove continuously uphill. Rape in bloom dotted the landscape on both sides of the highway and looked like patches of gold foil on the lush green mountain slopes. We saw groves of peach trees covered in pink flowers and pear orchards with white flowers in front of and behind the traditional folk houses. They were planted along the contours of the misty undulating mountain terrain.

We then followed a winding trail going deep into the thick forest to a newly built inn of log cabins for holiday travelers. We passed over a small bridge over a stream and through a gate built in traditional architectural style. Numerous small log cabins were neatly arranged inside the compound along the narrow gully. Blending into the surroundings these cabins fir logs cabins stood in quiet harmony with the surrounding forest.

According to Mr. Huang, head of the reservoir administrative office, a "stone ape", a "home-watching cliff", a "lovers' cliff" and other grotesquely shaped rocks stood on the hill in the middle of Hongyan Lake. He told us the nine mountain peaks around the reservoir looked like nine crouching lions, and another one looked like a huge elephant. Together, they resemble the painting called "nine lions surrounding an elephant". Purple mist rose from time to time from the Zijin (Purple Gold) Lake area of the reservoir. Around Dragon Boat Festival time every year, flocks of geese fly over the lake. This inspired the painting "confrontation between fish in the lake and geese in the sky".

A Dangerous Bottleneck on Zishui River

We drove quickly one morning to the Zhexi Reservoir. The bus zipped along the highway running along the Zishui River. On the way we passed a section of the river called Zhetan. There the river narrows and enters a narrows. Along the north bank is a shallow sandy shoal and close to the south bank are numerous dangerous reefs. The frothing river twisted and turned sharply and narrowed to 15 metres wide in some places. Here is one of the rivers notorious shoals which in times past often destroyed or capsized boats. In the morning after a rain, the green mountains were misty and the river milky white. Everything looked mysterious and beautiful hiding the danger lurking in the dangerous shoals and swift currents.

The passenger viewpoint is built in a quiet mountain valley several kilometres from this major dam. We walked from the highway down more than a hundred steps down a steep staircase to the floating harbour which rocked up and down with current. There we boarded a motor boat, which was extremely fast. On the boat, we passed through steep slopes of the reservoir.

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Far up the reservoir the course of the river first narrowed then widened. Ferry boats shuttled to and fro between the mountain villages from time to time. Probably to avoid the danger of floods, all the timber-framed houses of the mountain people were built up on the mountain slopes and projected over the water on stilts. The houses are uniquely designed and they form one village after another built against the green mountains and facing the water. It is said that most people in these villagers are descendants of Yaos in Meishan, and their ancestors once occupied the Anhua County seat during the late Tang to the Northern Song (960 — 1127) dynasties.

The luxuriant green mountain forest boasts more than a dozen species of rare trees, such as Gingko biloba, Cathaya argyrophylla, Pseudolarix amabilis and Podocarpus nagi, all which are of great scientific interest. We felt like we were in a fairyland as we strolled along the leaf covered mountain trails and inhaled the fresh air. We took in the fragrance of the fruit and enjoyed the green trees growing everywhere.

In the western bay there are a few little islands. Patches of yellow flowering rape grew on there dome shaped summits. Along the shore are several sheer cliffs, including cragged Jiangjun (General) Cliff, steep Xiangshi (Elephant Rock) Cliff and towering Houshi (Roaring Lion) Cliff. The faces of some of these cliffs are beautiful resembling flower petals. The scenery and view shifted and changed endlessly as we went along.

Possible Ecological Hazards for the Water-Mill Village

Darong Village could be developed into a folk cutoms tour destination. We took a bus to a narrow mountain valley travelling up the south bank of the river. A timber-framed house typical in the local area stood on the other side of the swift mountain stream strewn with rock. In front of the house was a water mill driven by water flowing in a sluice from the stream. Obviously, it was used to power some sort of machinery in the house, because we could hear a strange clattering and creaking. Looking upstream, we noticed that more timber-framed houses were nestled together along the stream. What really caught our attention was the big and small water mills standing alongside the houses. A rough count indicated there were over 20 of them, most of them in operation.

From the bus we walked down toward the stream. It seemed the rocks on the bed of the stream became more inviting as we came closer to them. They looked like a steamed bread strewn evenly under the current and harmonised with water driven mills on the bank. We crossed the stream over a stone bridge and came near a small house. There we could easily see the sluice water rushing down to drive the rotating mill machinery. A thick wooden axle went through the centre of the mill machinery, its ends sheathed in an iron hoop. The longer end of the millhouse framework connected and fastened to the back of the house. When the mill turned, a wooden mechanism shaped like a cross drove a wooden hand rocking up and down. We could see the roof of the house was covered with fir bark, which was covered in green moss. I heard pounding from behind a closed door, and I grew curious. I opened the door hoping to get a look. Then yellow dust poured out almost choking me. As it happened the mill was used to process powder from a special kind of tree and used for making incense sticks. It was told one ton of this powder brings a few thousand yuan.

The village harvests a lot of bamboo, and it also set up a paper mill by the stream. We went to visit the mill and found it producing a very coarse yellowish paper, that kind used in firecracker production and used for ceremonial burning in Taoist and Buddhist temples. Regrettably this paper mill produced a lot of pollution and all of it is released into the stream. We saw yellow foam covering the streambed, causing serious damage to the ecology. In addition, to build their houses the villagers used rocks to lay the foundations, which also causes a serious hazard to the ecology and environment. If these practices are not stopped, the unique clarity of the stream will soon disappear.

1. **The narrow and long street flanked by timber-framed houses in Tangshi Village permitting ancient flavour.**
2. **Enjoying a meal at the back yard in the home of a local farmer amidst fragrance of flowers and bamboo.**
3. **The bean curd workshop at the basement of a stilt-house in Tangshi Village.**
4. **There are more than 20 such water mills in Darong Village**
5. **Hongyan Lake is known for delicate mountains and naked red cliffs.**

Unique Stilt-Houses Street

Not far downstream we saw a village with timber-framed stilt-houses projecting over the water on the north bank. Looking up from the boat, these houses appeared very magnificent. Built on top of thick timber columns resting on rocks, the tile-roofed structures look like castles in the air. Extending down the slope amidst the houses was a staircase made of blue limestone. It looks like gauze draping down to the edge of the stream.

We took a walk along the narrow limestone-paved street. Overhead, the eaves that extending out from both sides almost shut out the sun from the street, making it bewitchingly gloomy. We saw several old grannies sitting under the eaves chatting, their grandchildren either sitting on their laps or playing about.

We stepped into a corridor by the waterfront. Through the cracks in the creaking floor boards, we could see water rushing past below. Looking in the distance out the window we saw ships sailing past on the wide Zishui River. The other bank was hidden in mist.

Ancient Buildings at the Hometown of Tao Shu

Of the numerous historical figures born in the Zishui River basin, Tao Shu is the best-known. Living during the Ming Dynasty (1760 — 1820), Tao served as the finance commissioner of Shanxi, the imperial inspector of Fujian, the finance commissioner and governor of Anhui, and as governor of Jiangsu. While in office, he cleaned out corruption at the government treasury, gave relief to flooded areas, harnessed the rivers and canals for water transport, strengthened controls over salt production, banned opium and fought against foreign invasions. He was promoted to viceroy of the Zishui and Taohua rivers at the 10th year of the Daoguang Reign (1782 — 1850) in the Qing Dynasty because of his great achievements, and was conferred a the posthumous title "Wenyi".

After arriving at Tao Shu's hometown — Xiaoyan Town, we hired a guide, who immediately took us to the harbour. A boat took us upstream. We got to Shawan Village on the north bank of the river in no time. Under a huge ancient tree we saw the finely sculptured gate of Tao Shu's mausoleum. Into the front side of the foundation are carved a pair of lions and it is inlaid with three pieces of white marble on which are carved the words "Tomb of Lord Tao, Minister of War and Viceroy of the Two Rivers". It is formerly the place where a memorial hall was built to make sacrifices to Tao Shu.

In Xiaqiaowei at the foot of Xiaxing (Shrimp-shaped) Hill about 2.5 kilometres to the east of Shawan is a pair of stone men and stone horses standing on land covered by rape in blossom. It is said to be a part of the mausoleum of Tao Shu. The No. 3 Secondary School of Anhua County standing opposite the ancient town of Xiaoyan across the river was formerly the residence of Tao Shu. We crossed the river by boat. Looking up we found it was built on a stone platform set half way up the mountain slope and surrounded by stone walls. Inside the main gate is a towering building with white walls and black-tiled roofs. Down below on both sides of the door are two sculptured stone liones in different postures. The head of one of the lions had disappeared and someone was curing hams on it. On the leg of the other a lenght of wire was fastened for drying clothes. We walked around the campus and found no other old buildings, except for pieces of stone sculptures scattered here and there. We also saw several old gingko trees growing luxuriently.

Cruising to Ancient Towns Along the River

In spite of a light drizzle, we went to Majitang Town to visit. The only street runs along the river for more than 1,000 metres. It is lined with numerous old-style shops selling a variety of goods, and well built residences. We were overjoyed to fine the ancient street so well preserved. Due to its unique geographic location and convenient access, Majitang had been a communications hub in northwestern Hunan Province since remote antiquity. Once it boasted three streets, six lanes, nine river ports, 72 inns as well as developed commerce and a handicraft industry. It was such an important port on the Zishui River that even the current county seat Taohuajiang ranked behind it.

From the town we took a bus to the Zhafu Hui Autonomous Township. It is another ancient town on the Zishui that is recorded in the Random Notes by the Southern Window, a literary classic. In ancient times, it was a port processing fish. Tao Kan, the great-grandfather of Tao Yuanming (the author of the famous classic Records of Taohuayuan), once served there as a petty official in charge of fishing. This is evidenced by the Temple of Lord Tao Kan, which was built in memory of his good service. Now, some of the old buildings have been replaced by modern cement ones, making the street look less neat. Fortunately, the huge thousand-year-old tree growing on top of a cliff close to the port can remind visitors how prosperous the town was in the past.

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Turning back from the port, we went to the harbour at Daligang Town and boarded a boat. When he heard that we wanted to rent his boat, the owner hurried to the street with a small barrel to buy more diesel oil. The boat was very small and nobody could move around and we had to stay seated. As he operated the wheel, the boat owner used his foot to move the tiny wooden rudders. From time to time, he had toextend his head out of the window to look ahead for danger.

The boat ploughed ahead on the river in the drizzle, and cold wind blew around the thin curtain and into the cabin, making all of us shiver with cold. Gradually many long sandbanks came into view. The small ones were covered with groves of reed and wild bamboo, while on the blarger ones were orange and

1. A view of the "water mill" village by the Darong Stream.
2. By the Taohua Lake at dusk, the little brother and sister laugh so heartily.
3. A stone sculpture of auspicious animals at the end of the Lianzhu Bridge.
4. Stone men and horses at the foot of the Xiaxing (Shrimp-shaped) Hill are said to be part of the Tao Shu's Graveyard.

pear trees, vegetable gardens and crop fields. Sometimes, we saw flocks of sheep and cattle grazing. The boat owner told us the largest sandbank was called Guojiazhou, which extends for 1.5 kilometres. There were altogether more than 1,400 people living in the villages on the sandbank, with a total of some 66 hectares of cultivated land.

Xiushan Noodles and Fengshan Inkslabs

On our way we passed Santangjie on the north bank of the Zishui. Looking up from the boat, we found the houses hanging over the river truly magnificent. They looked like the three-story buildings we saw in cities and give us the impression that they might collapse anytime. The street also surprised us. It was exceptionally clean. Numerous shops of timber-framing and tile-roofs lined the street that extended towards the west. Among them were clinics and drug stores with wooden bars, stalls under huge oil-clothed umbrellas, workshops producing paper umbrellas and wooden shoes, and shops selling tobacco, ginger, mats, tea, palm fibre, firecrackers and other native products, each of which had a rarely found rustic elegance. At the eastern end of the street was a Catholic church. It happened to be Sunday. We found most people who sat inside the church listening to the priest were local women. The church structure and the atmosphere inside formed a sharp contrast with the traditional look of the ancient town.

Upon arriving at Xiushan Town, we bid farewell to the owner of the boat, then turned and walked along the street. Compared with the several towns we visited upstream, Xiushan, which is located to the western side of the Xiunu Mountain, is proud of its beautiful landscape, abundant produce and convenient transport. This explains why it appears more prosperous. According to the local people, the town produces two famous products. One is called Xiushan noodles. Made of local flour and spring water, the noodles have a unique taste and stand up while boiling. It has been very famous since the Qing Dynasty.

The other is the Fengshan ink-slabs made with blue limestone from the northern slope of Wufeng Mountain. They were first made by the Zhu brothers in the first year of the Guangxu Reign (1871 — 1908) of the Qing Dynasty. Since the Revolution of 1911, the ink-slabs have been much sought after and are now exported to the United States, Australia, New Zealand and Japan.

Tips for the Traveller

Transport: To start out, take a one-hour drive on the expressway or an air-conditioned express train to Yiyang, a city 70 km from Changsha. In Yiyang,there are long-distance buses or minicabs going to counties like Yuanjiang, Taojiang, and Anhua. The taxi fare in the city is 8 yuan up. For a tricycle, 2 yuan up. The rent for a boat voyage upstream is not fixed.

Accommodation: Yiyang: Taohua Hotel, Yiyang Hotel, Yintai Hotel, etc.; Standard room: 100~200 yuan.

Yuanjiang: Yuanjiang Hotel, Qionghu Hotel and Ziyun Hotel, etc.; standard room: 60~120 yuan.

Taojiang County: Taohuajiang Hotel, Fenghuang Hotel, etc.; standard room: 80~150 yuan.

Anhua County: Anhua Hotel, Meishan Hotel, etc.; standard room: 60~120 yuan.

Delicacies: All-fish banquets, whitebait banquets, all-bamboo banquets, Wutan fish, local farmers' cuisine, potted dishes, various dishes cooked with tea and puddings.

Special Local Produce: Preserved eggs, bamboo articles and artifacts, water bamboo mats, phoenix dancing ink-slabs, tea, Hunan lotus, and citrus.

Travel Agencies

Yiyang City Tourism Bureau: (737) 422 1631
Yuanjiang City Tourism Bureau: (737) 272 2259
Taojiang County Tourism Bureau: (737) 888 0424
Anhua County Tourism Bureau: (737) 722 3160

1. **Angered by the bright clothes of Xiao Liu and Xiao Pan, the wild buffalo charge towards them quickly.**
2. **Two local girls cooperate with each other to prepare meals for us.**

Enjoying the Net-taking Festival in Shandong

Photos & article by Yu Chunshui

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In March when the earth is warmed by the sun and the gentle breezes of spring, of the six townships and villages in Jimo County on Jiaodong Peninsular, Shandong Province, Zhougezhuang is the only village that has kept the tradition of worshipping the sea. People there call it the Net-taking Festival or the Fishermen's Festival, hoping it will bless them with a bumper catch and smooth sailing.

The festival generally falls on any date around Guyu (Grain Rain, the 6th of the 24 Chinese solar terms), because it is the best time for fishing. Usually when fishermen are ready to go to sea, they choose an auspicious date to carry the fishnets onto their boats, and the ceremony to worship the sea follows.

The Net-taking Festival is almost as important as the Spring Festival to the locals. They make ample preparations by first readying for sacrifice three kinds of animals: swine, chicken and fish. The women show off their skills at dough modelling. The models can weigh well over four or five kilograms, and come in various shapes such as peach-shaped birthday cakes, intertwined dragons and plump flowers.

In addition, the captain of each boat sends some people to clean and decorate the Temple of the Dragon King. A gate made of branches of pine and cypress trees is set up on the beach before the temple. Hanging from the gate are a horizontal, inscribed board and colourful lanterns. A temporary stage is also erected on the beach. Meanwhile, a venerable old man will solemnly write a "Memorial of Peace" to the Dragon King, the God of Fortune and the Goddess of the Sea on yellow papers specially used for worshipping the gods. The day before the sacrificial ceremony, the fishermen clean and tidy their boats, put up some couplets and fly a red flag over the bow. Then they sail into the bay, line the boats up straight and anchor them in front of the village, leaving a space of 10 metres between boats. All the boats are pointing out to sea, ready for the Festival the next day.

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When the long awaited day comes, the fishermen are busy at daybreak, placing the animal offerings, the dough creations and other auspicious articles on the altars. Then they set up bamboo poles called "standing tassels". A group of buoys as big as fists are strung on a line hung between the poles. Brightly coloured flags bearing the number of every boat fly on top of these poles, symbols for good luck and wishes for a bountiful catch. In no time dozens of altars are readied, each representing a boat. Following an announcement by the emcee, there is a great din of drums and pipes, and one after another all kinds of folk celebrations take place on the stage. Even the old folks take a stool along and join the fun. Women gather around the altars, appreciating each others' big, white dough models, while the men congregate by the firecracker display, waiting to set them off.

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1. **At daybreak, fishermen carry their offerings to the festival site.**
2. **The altar of every boat is laden with food and auspicious articles.**
3. **The beach is full of people having fun.**
4. **The walls of the Temple of the Dragon King are covered with good wishes.**
5. **Setting off firecrackers is an important part of the Festival.**

A FOUR-DAY DIY-TRIP IN XIAMEN

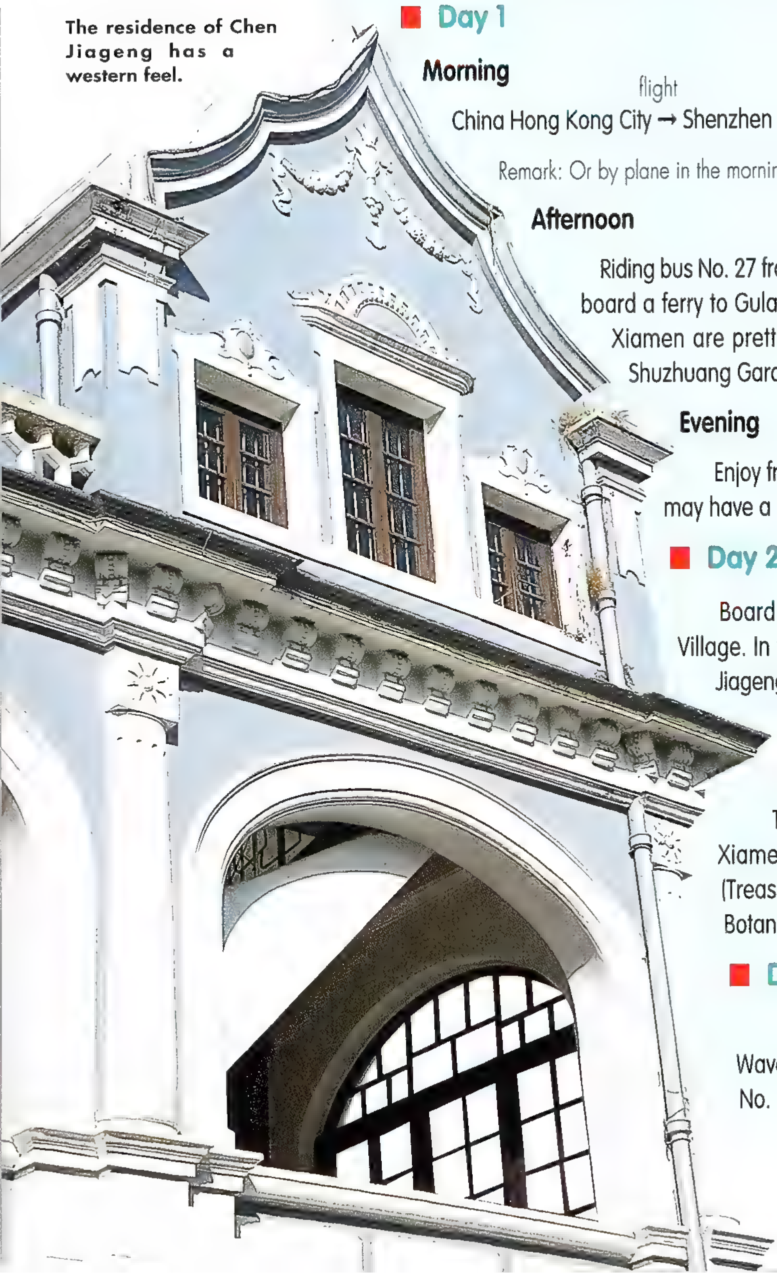
Photos & article by Jackie Tsang

There is a huge stele full of relief inscriptions behind Chen Jiageng's Tomb.

Since I graduated from college and began working, the time available for vacations has never been as long as when I was a student. After earning sufficient money, my interest in travelling, which is my ultimate desire, has been rekindled. The first idea for a destination was a seaport city. Although it is impossible for me to take four weeks off, a four-day visit to the seaport city of Xiamen is proved perfect.

Itineraries

Departure cities: Hong Kong, Manila, Kula Lumpur, Singapore, Macao, Beijing, Shanghai, or Guangzhou.



The residence of Chen Jiageng has a western feel.

Day 1

Morning

China Hong Kong City $\xrightarrow{\text{flight}}$ Shenzhen Fuyong Harbour Pie $\xrightarrow{\text{ferry}}$ Xiamen, Fujian Province

Remark: Or by plane in the morning so as to reach Xiamen before 12:00.

Afternoon

Riding bus No. 27 from the Gaoqi Airport in Xiamen to Xiagu Ferry Pier takes about one hour. Then board a ferry to Gulangyu, also called Drumming Wave Islet. Check into a hotel there (hotels in Xiamen are pretty expensive and it's cheaper to stay in Drumming Wave Islet. Then visit Shuzhuang Garden and Gangzaihou bathing beach.

Evening

Enjoy fresh seafood at the roadside buffet and take in the evening seaside view. You may have a chance to attend the occasional concert at the art centre.

Day 2

Board the ferry for Xiamen. At the Xiamen pier take bus No. 51 to Jimei School Village. In the afternoon, visit the nearby Aoyuan Garden and the residence of Chen Jiageng before returning to Xiamen. In the evening, take a stroll on Zhongshan Road and enjoy shopping.

Day 3

Take bus No. 2 at the ferry pier to South Putuo Temple, and visit neighbouring Xiamen University. Take bus No. 22 to Hulishan Fort and Rongguang Baozang (Treasure) Museum. From there you can take bus No. 12 to Wanshi (10,000 Rocks) Botanical Garden.

Day 4

Visit Sunlight Rock, the Piano Garden and Bright Moon Garden in Drumming Wave Islet in the morning. Return to downtown Xiamen by boat at 11:00. Take bus No. 27 to the airport and fly to Shenzhen. Return by boat to Hong Kong.

Aoyuan Road at Jimei will give you a chance to see many pavilions and buildings.

A Taiwanese restaurant plays theme music [illegible]

at dusk around Jimei and to see
jogging students from the
e of Navigation.

Budget

Return ferry ticket (Hong Kong to Shenzhen): About HK$ 200 (preferential, must be purchased together with flight ticket).
Return flight ticket (Shenzhen to Xiamen): About HK$ 1,300.
Accommodation: Lizhidao Hotel in Drumming Wave Islet, 150 yuan per night.
Other options: 1. Lujiang Hotel (opposite the pier)
Add: 54 Lujiang Road
Tel: 86-592-2024644
Standard twin-bed room: US$ 40 up.
2. Singapore Hotel (next to the Zhongshan Park):
Add: 113-121 Xi'an Road
Tel: 86-592-2026688
Standard twin-bed room: 328 yuan up.
Transport dining: About 100 yuan a day, 400 yuan for 4 days.
Entrance fees: About 130 yuan (South Putuo Temple: 3 yuan; Hulishan Fort and Rongguang Baozang Museum: 25 yuan; Wanshi Botanical Garden: 10 yuan; Aoyuan and Chen Jiageng Garden: 10 yuan; Shuzhuang Garden: 20 yuan; Sunlight Rock and Piano Garden: 40 yuan; Bright Moon Garden: 15 yuan)
Total: HK$ 1,500 and 980 yuan

There are grand celebrations of Bodhisattva's birthday held at the South Putuo Temple on the 19th days of the second and sixth lunar months.

The Drumming Wave Islet, known as a "Garden by the Sea", is the most celebrated tourist destination in Xiamen.

A FOUR-DAY DIY-TRIP IN XIAMEN

Although only a small island of 1.78 sq km, the Drumming Wave Islet is very famous and most tourists to Xiamen come just to experience this island.

Full of Exotic Flavours

The Drumming Wave Islet deserves its name "Island of Music". When I went up to my room and opened my hotel window, the clear, melodious, staccato sound of a piano permeated the space. I looked inquiringly at the attendant, who said in Mandarin with a little southern Fujian accent, "It is a child playing the piano next door." "Then I want this room, please!" I loved being awakened everyday by these melodious tones. Actually it mattered little if it was sweet music from a neighbourhood piano, violin or viola, all soothed and relaxed me.

Many foreign invaders came to Drumming Wave Islet after the Opium War (1842) to build their consulates, villas and schools. They brought Western music with them. After over a century of Western music and culture, many world famous musicians have been cultivated from there, such as Yin Chengzong and Xu Feiping. These invaders also left behind many buildings with foreign architecture. These are mostly located along the Fujian Road, Lujiao Road and Zhangzhou Road.

3

4

A Pleasant Leisurely Stroll by the Sea

Guided by street signs I walked to Sunlight Rock. Cars are not allowed on the island and the only vehicles are electric mobiles. This is a don't miss scenic overlook, where one can see the entire island and Xiamen city. There is a grandiose Memorial Hall to Zheng Chenggong at Sunlight Rock. Zheng, a general in the 17th century, drove the Dutch from the island of Taiwan and transformed into his base against the invading Manchu. The three-storey building is an off-white colour. The four huge round posts standing on the ground floor porch support a semicircle veranda on the second floor. The top of the posts is a composite of Ionic and Corinthian architecture, and the gate and window shades are all made of rosewood. The building looks simple and elegant in bright contrasting colours. You can view other scenic spots as well like Mid-Autumn Pan Cake, Dragon Head Mountain Village, and the Sunlight Rock Temple on the hill.

Don't miss Shuzhuang Garden next to the Gangzaihou bathing beach. I came at dusk. I choose a very pleasant spot to sit in the setting sun and was embraced by the gentle sea breezes, blue sky and white clouds. Everything was so beautiful.

1

2

The Simple Beauty of the Schools

The next day, I took bus No. 51 from the bus terminal opposite the ferry pier to Jimei. The bus drove swiftly across the Xiamen Bridge. There are many cargo ships bathed in sunlight at the Port of Xunjiang and surf occasionally broke on the calm sea. Jimei was right across the bridge. It has a huge attractive arch. At first it was a private school called Tizhai School established in 1894 by the well-known overseas Chinese Chen Jiageng. Later a kindergarten, primary school, middle school, normal school and another institute were created in succession, forming a very compact community of schools. Opposite the lecture hall are the students' dormitories where clothing hung from all the windows and verandas. It is an interesting contrast to the clean and solemn classroom building.

Walking further away from the lecture hall I saw a white building as magnificent as a palace. A five-star red flag fluttered vigorously on a pole on top of the building. Next to the pole are four big characters set into the four story building meaning to "brave the wind and waves". The middle section from the ground floor to the second floor is a semicircle veranda surrounded by light-blue railings. A bronze sculpture faces the ground-floor entrance.

I Hate to Part with You, Aoyuan Garden

The Aoyuan Garden consists of three sections: the Mausoleum of Chen Jiageng, the Monument of Liberation, and a porch. Every part has a beautiful relief. I enjoyed looking at the monument bathed in the setting sun with its life-like figures carved in relief. I like the series "Extracurricular Activities" most, which includes rope skipping, horizontal bar, kicking shuttlecock, and group gymnastics. There are also reliefs about industrial activities, such as

Yes, once in Xiamen, one must go to see Drumming Wave Islet. But another place is also a must — Jimei.

5

6

1. The Monument of Liberation — the major architecture of Aoyuan Garden.
2. The relief in Aoyuan Garden are life-like with exquisite workmanship.
3. The Gangzaihou bathing beach with its clear water and silver sand attracts many swimmers.
4. An enchanting beach on Drumming Wave Islet.
5. Architectures with unique styles can be seen everywhere in Drumming Wave Islet.
6. Along the ring road of Drumming Wave Islet, you can appreciate the vast expanse of the sea.
7. The grand Academic Building of Jimei Middle School.

paint, salt, coking plants and iron-smelting. The artists expressed the essence of everything using simple and interesting designs.

There is a huge stonewall behind the monument which is truly amazing. On the front wall are carved relief of many subjects with gripping stories. In front of the wall is Chen Jiageng's Mausoleum shaped like horse's hoof. It is surrounded by 15 dark stone reliefs introducing the first half of Mr Chen's life and achievements. It would take a whole day to read them carefully. Pressed for time, I had to give it up hoping I could come back to look at them one by one sometime in the future.

Vegetarian Diet at South Putuo Temple

Looking at the map of Xiamen, I found that the scenic spots in the city are close to one another-the South Putuo Temple, Xiamen University, Hulishan Fort and Wanshishan (10,000-Rock Mountain) Botanical Garden are all conveniently connected by buses. Still half asleep I took bus No. 2 early in the morning on my third day to my first destination. The big lotus pond in front of South Putuo Temple was covered with lotus leaves. It was a pity that the lotus

CHEN JIAGENG — THE GOD OF SCHOOLS

Chen Jiageng was born on October 21,1874 in Jimei Village in Tong'an County, Fujian Province. He followed his father to Singapore to learn business at 17, and became a well-known "Magnate of Rubber" in Southeast Asia. Believing deeply that the key to industrial and commercial development in China is promoting education, he devoted himself to setting up and running schools. At 20, he started the Tizhai School in his hometown. In 1913, he set up the Jimei Primary School. Then with his brother, Chen Jingxian, he continued to amass funding to open more schools. Altogether he opened in his hometown a group of Jimei schools that included kindergarten, primary school, normal school, teaching school, marine production, an institute of navigation, commercial, agricultural and forestry colleges, as well as the Xiamen University. He also provided financial aid to over 110 schools in more than 20 cities and counties in southern Fujian Province. In Singapore, where he lived for a time, he sponsored many schools. Donating over US$ 100 million to set up schools, nearly the equivalent of his family possessions, he was called respectfully "God of Schools".

South Putuo Temple, Xiamen University, Hulishan Fort and Wanshishan Botanical Garden, altogether forming a sight-seeing route.

flowers were gone. Beyond the threshold was a crowd of Buddhist laymen and laywomen gathered before the Hall of Heavenly Kings. Incense smoke permeated the air and the chanting of scriptures was heard everywhere in the temple.

South Putuo Temple was built in the Tang Dynasty. Here is where Bodhisattva is mainly worshipped. The temple is named from its location, which is south of the Putuo Mountain in Zhejiang Province.

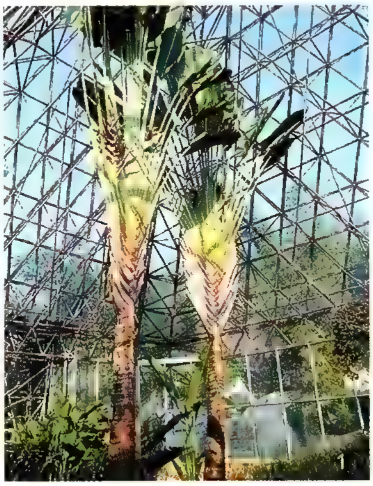
As one of the four major cuisines of Xiamen, South Putuo Temple's vegetarian food is widely celebrated. Many tourists come here especially to taste it. I did go into the Puzhaolou Vegetarian Restaurant to have a look although I didn't try any of the food. Reading the menu, I could see why so many customers came here. It has a wide variety of food catering to different needs, both for a fast food and feasts.

Watching Military Training at School

Less than a five minute walk from South Putuo Temple I came to the side entrance of Xiamen University. It was built in April 1921 by Chen Jiageng and is the first university in Fujian. Though still during vacation, to my surprise, there were many students on campus reviewing their lessons for examination.

About 100 students in army uniform were groveling on the ground, a gun in everyone's hands.

Born and brought up in Hong Kong, I've always had a fascination about military training, a required course for college freshmen at in China's inland, and think I would like to have a taste of it. I was so delighted to chance by seeing these students. On the lawn encircling the round square, the students lay prostrate in an orderly formation, boys on the left, girls on the right. They were learning how to aim, and the officers were checking on their poses. I took the chance to chat with some women students. Our conversation was so interesting that even a nearby officer joined us. I watched them march on the square in full uniform and they sang powerful patriotic songs, though a bit out of tune.



The Thought-Provoking Museum

Walking out from Xiamen University, I boarded a bus for Hulishan Fort. Its entrance was not conspicuous, but facing the gate was an attractive long sculpture of music staff. Set within one end on a stone base placed in the middle of the road it began with an opened music book. The seemingly endless staff depicted by steel bars stretched in curves for a few hundred metres. The music book was made of stones on which was inscribed "The Song of Drumming Wave Islet". Notes ran across the entire score.

Upon entering the site, I came first to the Xiamen Rongguang Baozang (Treasure) Museum built in cooperation with a Singaporean collector Mr. Zhang Rongguang in 1997. There are five parts to the site. In the hall of "Rare Stones in the World" I saw stones with natural patterns of pine trees, bamboo, plums, monkeys, pigs and dogs. Incredibly even the Chinese numbers from one to 10 and the English letters from a to z are shown on the stone. How on earth were they formed in these ways?

Next came a series of halls with exhibits of ancient Chinese and foreign arms, including "Ancient Swords", "Ancient Cannons", and "Ancient Firearms". All these halls have similar rectangular structures, about 100 square metres with a vaulting ceiling and chests lining two sides. In the two halls of treasured swords and falchions are exhibits of the gold sword of the King of Jordan, the fighting falchion of the royal guards of the Forbidden City, and swords from France, Russia and Sudan, all of exquisite workmanship. It would be wonderful if they were only for appreciation. I was surprised to see in the first and second halls of ancient firearms so many different cannon and guns have been invented by people. These include the Turkish flintlock cannon, the heavy-calibre British scatter-gun, a Napoleon pistol, the Spanish pistol, American light pistols, Belgium needle pistols, French percussion pistols, Italian scatter-gun, etc. or over 200 pistols in total. In the second hall there is the gun Lin Zexu (the Imperial Envoy who burnd all the opium in Humen during the Opium War) once used, and the gun and the five-barreled repeating rifle used by the team leader of the imperial bodyguards for the Forbidden City.

Too Beautiful to Touch

Bus No. 12 took me from the fort to the Wanshishan Botanical Garden which includes the Zhongshan Park, the martyrs' monument

and cemetery, the botanical garden, Wanshi Rock, Zhongyan Rock, Taiping Rock, Zuixian Rock, and Huxi Rock. I spent most of my time visiting the botanical garden. The names of the flowers are most pleasant and delightful, such as "18 Scholars", "Jubilance", "Treasure-Carrying Dragon Boat", and "The Red God of Longevity". The huge traveller's tree almost pierced the roof of the greenhouse.

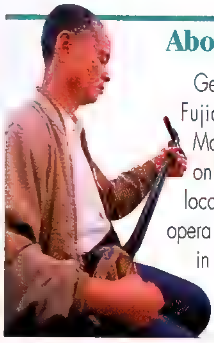
There are a great variety of cacti in the garden, and the paths go around in long, orderly rows keeping the plants within easy reach. Obviously the manager and workers have taken great pains cultivating them. A crowd of tourists came along. Seeing the cacti in such bright and beautiful colours, some touched them which is against the rules. An elderly man even shamelessly picked a little flower of the cactus! Seeing this, Xiao Li immediately stopped him and said, "Please kindly take good care of the plants and don't touch them!" He was furious, but he tried to be polite. None of them seemed to understand how he treasured these precious plants.

A Farewell Melody from the Xiamen People

I took a boat from Gulangyu to the downtown area from where I would go to the airport. On the open ground in front of the normally crowded Xiamen Pier a special performance was taking place. It turned out to be an amateur Gezai (Little Song) opera troupe of retired people. They put on the street show weekends in both morning and afternoon.

On a simple stage made of red and blue canvas propped up by iron bars, a group of elderly actors were confidently performing confidently before a crowd. The performers were very good singers and actors. The instrument players, with their eyes closed, were intoxicated by the music. The instruments in their hands had become part of their bodies. The passage of time had bequeathed to them adept skills and left, after all the ups and downs of life, only kindness on their faces. The performers expected no reward. They only gave of themselves on part of their weekend to entertain people, and more importantly, to relax and enjoy themselves.

Translated by L.Yu



About the Gezai Opera

Gezai opera, or Xiangju opera, is popular in southern Fujian, Taiwan and the Chinese communities in Malaysia and Indonesia. It is also called "Snow Fallen on the Ground". With popular librettos composed by local folks, it is much loved by the people. The Gezai opera was developed from Jinge, a kind of ballad singing in southern Fujian dialect. Learning recently from the Siping and Peking operas, it now has a flowing musical performance

1. **The tall traveller's tree in the greenhouse at the Wanshi shan Botanical Garden.**
2. **Built in the Tang Dynasty at the foot of Wulao Peak stands South Putuo Temple where one can appreciate the long history and rich culture of southern Fujian.**
3. **The hall of cacti at the Wanshishan Botanical Garden.**
4. **Students of Xiamen University are learning how to take aim.**
5. **The gallery collecting world's ancient batteries in the Rongguang Baozang Museum.**
6. **The Wanshishan Botanical Garden is located north of Shishan (Lion's Mountain) in the east of Xiamen City. It has lush green mountains and clear water with a rich reserve of forestry.**

Wish Them a Happy Children's Day!

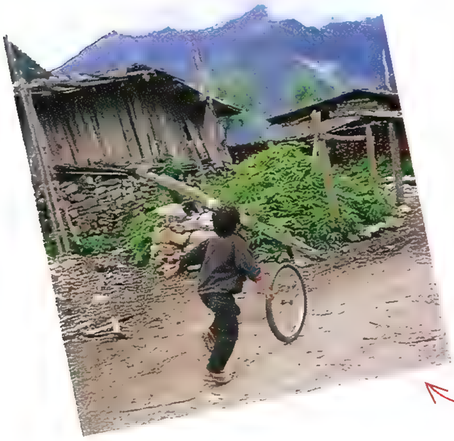
Photos by Dianna Lau (Tibet part), Nie Baiyi (Guizhou part)   Article by Dianna Lau

To most children living in urban areas, Children's Day (June 1) is really a special day. Their parents will take them out for feasts. Some elder relatives may give them presents and toys.

However, for those children living in remote areas like Tibet and Guizhou in China, "Children's Day" may be just an abstract concept. No one gives them "toys", they make interesting things from discarded items themselves, which you may agree is environmentally friendly. Inspite of this, they are more or less absorbed when playing with these "toys".

In poorer areas, it is almost a luxury to "play" when people's basic living requirements are unsatisfied.

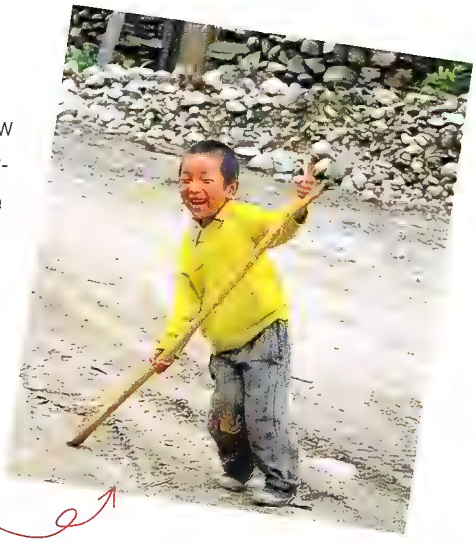
Nevertheless, we wish them everlasting happiness in their lives!



In a small village in Bomi Prefecture in the Tibet Autonomous Region, we got out of the car and saw children playing with toys they made themselves. Most of the boys were playing with discarded bicycle tyres. They rolled the tyre, using an iron rod to control it in the centre. Keeping the rod and tyre balanced, the player pushed the "car" forward quickly and chased after it.

On our way to Tibet's Zogang, we saw this boy was playing with a waste car-shaped candy box. He knelt alone on the rough road, excitingly filling the car with sand, pushing it, or emptying the sand when bored. Just for fun.

At the same site, another boy found a branch into a Y-shape. With his left hand holding the cleft tightly, he put weight of his body on the branch, and stepped along as though he had three legs. Though simple, from his smile you can tell he really enjoyed this.



In eastern Tibet, we were again invited to play by hospitable children. Walking hand in hand, we passed local residences, grasses grown wild, crossed a steel cable bridge, and finally reached their "headquarters". The children slid back and forth on the iron cable until one of them was forced to go home by his grandmother.

On a street in another village, a group of children screamed in great exhilaration. A vehicle was coming. They stood poised for action. When the car passed by them, they grabbed onto the back of the car and were pulled by the vehicle getting a free ride as it kept moving. Watching from the roadside, I was filled with worry!

The pair of shoes, worn by this little girl living in a Dong village in Chejiang of Guizhou Province, has already been worn ragged. But she treasured them because they were a New Year's gift given to her by her elder brother.

In Leishan County in Guizhou Province, there are no real bicycle tyres, and children twisted iron rods into tyres and handles. But it is more difficult to play well on the farm fields.

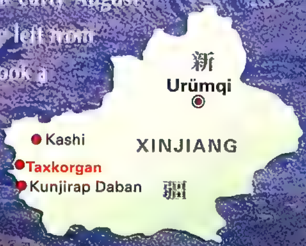
Our car attracts a large crowd of people begging for money or food as we pulled over at a terminal in Tibet. This girl waited hopefully for one of us to throw something from the window.

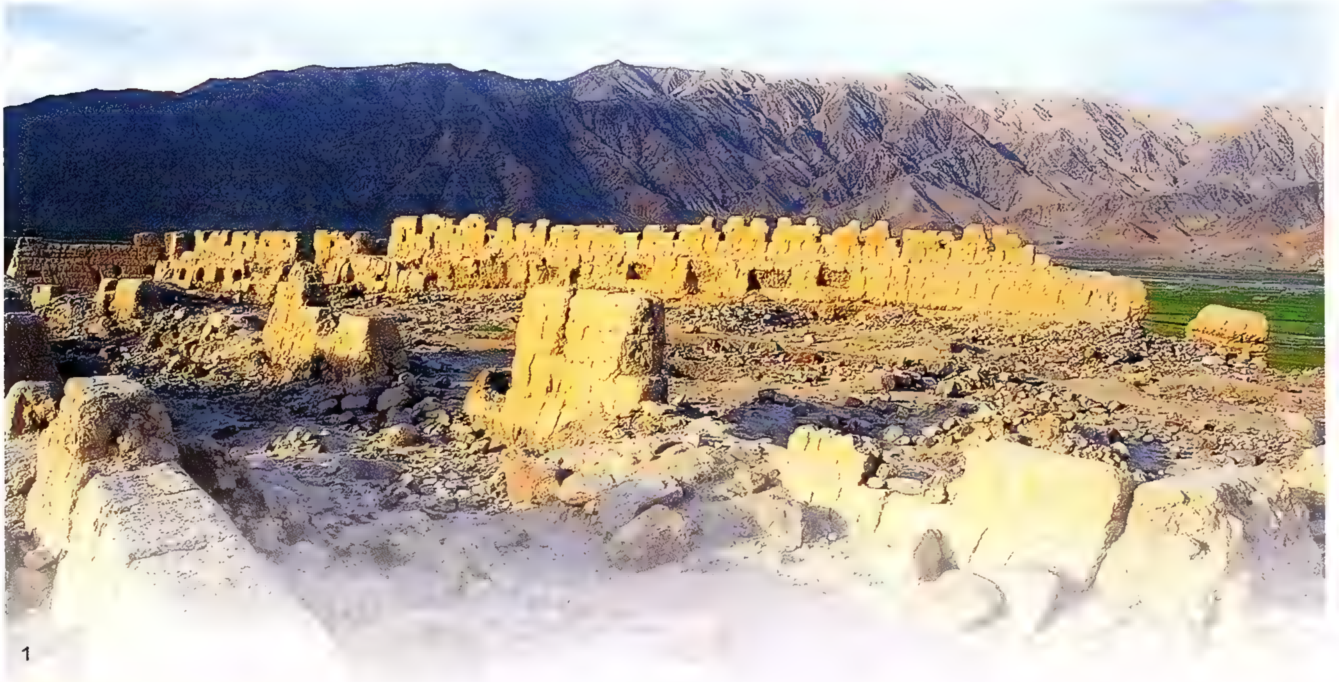
Seeing these children on our trips, we should learn to appreciate and be thankful for what we have.

A TRIP TO TAXKORGAN IN XINJIANG

Photos & article by Wu Pingguan

From a song called "The Bright Sun is Shining Over Taxkorgan", composed by Chen Gang in the 1970s, we can feel the hard-working nature of the Tajik people and the harmony on the Pamir Plateau. In early August, known by the local people as the "golden time", we left from Beijing and Lanzhou respectively to Urümqi, and took a bus to Kashi. After completing border formalities, we rented a car to take us to Taxkorgan. It was already nightfall.

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Access to Western Xinjiang Plateau

At 6 a.m. the following morning, we drove our car from Kaxgar in Kashi, regarded as an oasis in West China, along the China-Pakistan Highway southwest to the Gaizi River. After two hours of driving, our car had left the oasis in the Gobi desert far behind, and before us high mountains blocked our view. A horizontal pole across the road warned us that a border inspection station lay ahead. After going through customs, we continued our journey. The snow-covered Gaizi Mountain valley was glowed in the morning sun, and the river rumbled in the valley. In the 294-km journey from Kashi to Taxkorgan, the altitude increases seven metres every kilometre. It's no wonder we felt slightly ill! Our car crawled along a long and narrow valley covered with snow. Luckily our rental car was a new "Santana"(taxi) ensuring a smooth journey. With the increase in elevation, the precipitoussness of the Gaizi River was remarkable. River water pounded against cliffs and sprayed high into the air.

2

We passed huge rocks and high peaks and finally drove out of the valley. A magnificent and unique plateau suddenly came into view. Standing by Karakor Lake, we had a full view of Muztagata Peak (7,546 metres), known as the "Father of Icebergs"; Konggur Peak (7,719 metres); and Konggurjiubi Peak (7,795 metres). Entering the source of the Gaizi River north of the lake, we saw yurts of the Tajiks dotting the vast expanse of grassland. Looking far across Karakor Lake, we saw a vast expanse of blue waves and the inverted reflection of Muztagata Peak in its waters. It was a sparklingly bright and vivid picture scene.

We continued the journey. Our driver sped up because he wanted to return to Kashi the same day. Sunlight shone over the Pamirs, and we were embraced by the warm bosom of the ancient plateau city in Taxkorgan County.

The Ruins of Jiepantuo State

Early the next day the sun shone beautifully and the breeze was gentle. Taxkorgan gradually came to life from the darkness. Taxkorgan Tajik Autonomous County was originally called Puli County, or Jiepantuo as described in the book *A Journey to the Western Regions in the Tang Dynasty* written by Xuan Zhuang, a famous monk in the Tang Dynasty. We climbed the ruins of the ancient Stone City, located northeast of the county seat. With a rock and stone foundation, the city walls were made of mud bricks. Although sections have collapsed, the city gates, watch towers and parapets are still clearly discernible. Standing on the outer clay terrace, we noticed that stone city walls outside the castle were built along the terrain in layer upon layer and with large gaps. The castle to which merchants streamed to along the ancient "Silk Road", seemed to prosper still.

Leaving the broken walls inside the castle, we walked to the edge of the cliffs in the east, and found that half of the variegated city walls there have collapsed. Facing east, Aral Grassy Beach, called "Golden Grassy Beach" by locals, was in view. The dazzling Taxkorgan River and its criss-crossed tributaries form a network of light and colour in the sunlight.

Taxkorgan is one of the highest places in China, and is a place of many rivers. Glaciers and snow-capped mountains are the inexhaustible water sources to dry areas in south Xinjiang. These numerous snow-capped mountains are the fountainheads of a large number of rivers, including Zelaipuxiang and Taxkorgan rivers, which converge into the Tarim River, the longest inland river in the world. Kunjirap Daban and Mingtake Daban are the major sources of the Taxkorgan River, which irrigates dry cultivated land and grasslands in Taxkorgan.

Women Baking Cakes in the Courtyard

Passing a Tajik village, we heard happy laughter. Following the sound, we found four women in a courtyard baking "nang" (a kind of pancake, the staple food of Xinjiang people). Before I went to Xinjiang, one of my friends told me that the Xinjiang people pay homage to "nangs" as piously as if to Allah. The difficult living conditions have made people realise that "nangs" are even more important than houses, cattle and sheep.

With the help of a young interpreter, we got to know the Tajik woman and her daughter-in-law who were baking the "nangs". A Uygur and Kirgiz woman came to help them. The "nang" pit is about one metre deep, and its inner wall is made of clay shaped like an upside-down vat, and there is a square platform made of clay blocks. The "nang" pit was being fired. The four sides of the pit were piled with cakes. The nang, made of fermented flour and a little alkali and salt, is thin in the center and thick on the edges, with designs in the middle. The designs are stamped with a chicken wing feather inserted into a wooden stick. The designs make the cakes artistic and also easier to bake.

The women called the cakes "Aimaike," and baked them the traditional way. Half an hour later, more than 20 nangs were ready. When the daughter-in-law was about to take them into the house, her mother-in-law stopped her and gave us one to taste. I broke a piece off with my fingers and put it in my mouth. It was fragrant and tasty, though slightly salty.

Our visit to this Tajik family allowed me to see with my own eyes the sacred "nang culture", the wealthy Tajik people and the peaceful and harmonious coexistence of different ethnic minorities.

Tajik Wedding Ceremonies

Later, we were invited to attend a Tajik wedding ceremony in the county seat. In the distance, we heard flute and drum music echoing in the skies of Taxkorgan County. The host was pleased to see guests from afar. First, he let us wash our hands. Following the Tajik custom, we waited for the host to give us a towel. It is a taboo to throw dirty water after washing hands. The host then invited us to enter the house, and served us with delicate and fragrant milk tea, flour snacks, milk drops and rice eaten with the hands.

Usually held in autumn, the ceremony lasts three days, and is mainly held at the bride's home. It was the first day of the wedding ceremony. By early morning, both the bride and the bridegroom's homes were full of guests, who presented gifts and spread flour (Tajik people believe flour is the purest substance), wishing them good luck. The bridegroom, Mareyi, 25 years old, has graduated from a polytechnic school and works at the Police Substation of the Forest Bureau of Taxkorgan County. The bride, Jiamila, also aged 25, is a graduate of the Kashi Teachers College. They were classmates in middle school and had chosen marriage freely.

The ceremony of "bathing and trying on garments" began at the bridegroom's home. The bridegroom was dressed with the help of his best men after bathing in clean spring water, and quietly sat on the edge of a "kang", which is a heated brick bed. His parents, relatives and friends vied with each other to spread flour on him, expressing their

Previous page:
(big) Tajik people engage in agriculture and animal husbandry. Most herders live in yurts.
(small) Herders spread their clothes and quilts on the grassland to dry them under the sun.

1. **Tajik people believe the Stone City was the capital of their ancestors in the early Christian era, as well as an outpost on the ancient Silk Road.**
2. **Before the coming of winter, Tajik men cut and store grasses for cattle and sheep.**
3. **"Nangs" are the staple food of people in the Taxkorgan region.**
4. **Gaizi River, which originated from Kalakule Lake, forms a lake in Bulongkule. The marshland by the lake is a paradise for cattle and sheep.**

wishes. Musicians outside the door blew eagle flutes and beat drums while guests happily performed Tajik dances to the music.

On the second day he was to marry his bride. Cheerful and light-hearted eagle flute music could be heard in the early morning around the mountains. We got onto a truck heading to the bride's home, singing a Tajik wedding song, *The Coming of the King*. The Tajik people regard the bridegroom as a king. The car carrying the bridegroom arrived just as we did. As the bridegroom walked from the vehicle, musicians sent by his family began to play music on their eagle flutes, and everyone performed Tajik dances in high spirits.

The bridegroom walked into the bride's home, and drank two bowls of milk tea with butter. Older people from the bride's family spread flour again over the bridegroom and elders who came with him, expressed their congratulations. After the bridegroom entered the house, the veiled bride stood nearby, accompanied by her bridesmaids.

The bride and groom then put rings on their little fingers. The bride's parents spread flour on both the bride and groom, wishing they would "remain a devoted couple to the end of their lives". A religious official said prayers for the new couple, and wished them good luck. The wedding ceremony at the bride's home was over. The bride then tearfully left her home for the groom's home. In accordance with Tajik's custom, the bride will not remove her veil during the three-day wedding ceremony. At noon on the fourth day, the bride eats food delivered by her parents. Afterwards, the ceremony of taking off the bride's veil begins. In front of many people, the groom takes off his bride's veil. Then the bride begins to knead flour and prepare "nangs", a way to resemble her new life.

The Legend of "Princess Castle"

The Tajiks believe in a legend that they are the descendants of the God of the Sun and a Han princess, and their history is connected to the Princess Castle, which is 4,000 metres above sea level, and 70 kilometres south of the county seat.

It is said that the king of Jiepantuo State first told the legend to the famous monk Xuan Zhuang, who wrote it into *A Journey to the Western Regions in the Tang Dynasty*. Many years ago, a Persian King wanted to marry a Chinese princess. When the princess arrived in Taxkorgan, Persia was experiencing civil strife. So, special envoys settled the princess on a mountain peak temporarily. When the civil strife in Persia was under control, the princess was found pregnant already. The princess's maid told the envoys that the God of the Sun came on his sun wheels to meet the princess at noon every day. Hearing the news, the envoys were pleasantly surprised, and decided not to continue their trip into Persia. They built palaces and city walls on the mountain so the princess could have her baby there. The princess gave a birth to a handsome son who was able to "command the wind and clouds". After growing up, he overthrew the nearby small states and established a strong state on the Pamir Plateau. The king of Jiepantuo said he was the boy's descendant. In his book, Xuan Zhuang also stated with certainty that Princess Castle was the centre of the state.

We continued along Taxkorgan River and arrived at the junction of the Kunjirap and Karaqiukur rivers. However, in summer, mighty currents swirl northward. Finding it impossible to cross the river here, we viewed

at it at a distance from a ridge we climbed opposite Princes Castle.

Princess Castle has a circumference greater than 2,000 metres. Built at an elevation of more than 4,000 metres, the ruins of the city are a stilt rock wall in its front, an earthen wall in the west and broken stone slopes in the south and north, by which the castle can be accessed. On the east-west slope, the castle was built along the natural terrace. The remains of terraced houses and walls are discernible. Within the castle stands a solitary cypress tree called the "Princess

Cypress". East of the castle is a watchtower.

Looking around, we found that the Princess Castle is strategically important, and the only way to the southern and northern routes of the Pamir section of the ancient Silk Road. It is also a vital communications line linking China with Afghanistan, Pakistan, India and the Amu River Valley. Further study is needed to verify it really was the capital of the ancient state of Jiepantuo, as Stein claimed.

Sacred Kunjirap Port

Kunjirap, "red wall" or "bloody ditch" in the Tajik and Uygur languages, means "impassable". Today it is a national gateway opening to Pakistan.

Out of the Taxkorgan county seat, we sped up our jeep, and finally arrived at the frontier inspection station in Kunjirap, just three kilometres from the Kunjirap Daban boundary tablet, at an elevation of 5,100 metres. In winter, the temperature here drops to as low as -43°C and the boiling point of water is just 70 degrees. Oxygen levels here are only 48 percent that at sea level, and it has a frost-free period of less than 60 days. Soldiers stationed here check passports and identities of people and goods coming in and out of China.

Accompanied by our friends, we arrived at the Kunjirap Daban Mountain Pass, surrounded by snow-clad mountains and located 5,200 metres above sea level. Border markers are erected every 200 metres, carved with the Chinese characters for "China" in red and its national emblem on one side; and "Pakistan" in Urdu. Looking into Pakistan, a highway and a river extend onwards. On the Chinese side, the China-Pakistan Highway and the Kunjirap River disappeared in northern mists.

Good-bye to Taxkorgan

When we decided to leave Taxkorgan, we were told that snow and rainstorms two days ago destroyed the China-Pakistan Highway, and it would take two weeks to repair it. Since we had official business to do, we still bid farewell to our friends finally.

The next morning, after passing Keqikekalakule, we were blocked by a 10-metre thick mud and rockslide over the highway wounding through the Gaizi Mountain Valley. The driver said, "The road is blocked, we have to stop here." Alighting from the jeep and carrying our heavy photographic equipment on our shoulders, we walked over the mud-rock flow and crossed deep gullies. Soon we saw a young Kirgiz man pushing a bicycle, who later helped us carry the equipment for 30 yuan.

I forget how far we walked before the Kirgiz man unloaded our equipment and said good-bye. We then had to walk out the valley with our heavy equipment on our backs again.

We walked along several sections of washed out highway before we stopped a car that had been trapped by mud-rock flows ahead and behind it. The driver had stayed in the car throughout the bitter night. We asked him to take us to Kashi, which he did for 100 yuan.

Out of the Gaizi Mountain Valley, we passed by Taxmilek and the farms in Tuokuzilak. As Taxkorgan glowed in the sunset again, we finally arrived in Kashi.

Translated by Jin Jianzhong

1. **At a Tajik wedding ceremony, the bridegroom receives prayers and congratulations in the bride's home.**
2. **A senior from the bride's home spreads wheat flour on the shoulders of the groom's guests to express his congratulations.**
3. **An exquisite living room of a wealthy Tajik family: The earthen bed against walls on three sides of the room offers accommodations for relatives and friends, and the glass skylight lets sunlight into the house.**
4. **A Pakistan international shuttle bus on the Dabudar Highway.**
5. **A Pakistani frontier inspector standing in front of the Chinese boundary tablet in Kunjirap Port.**
6. **The Princess Castle, a place "easy to defend and difficult to attack", is where the mysterious legend of the Chinese Princess and the God of the Sun began.**

TAXKORGAN Located with an average elevation of more than 4,000 metres, the Taxkorgan Tajik Autonomous County is the only county bordering four countries on China's mainland: Tajikistan and Kirghizstan in the northwest, Afghanistan in the southwest and Pakistan in the south. The county seat is 3,200 metres above sea level, the lowest place in the county. Taxkorgan has 37 percent less oxygen than that on the plains. It has a population of 30,518 from 14 ethnic groups. Of them, 25,298 are from the Tajik ethnic group. Taxkorgan was a strategic point on the ancient Silk Road, and is China's gateway to Central Asia, West Asia and North Africa.

1

The Nun Opera Singers of Aba

Photos & article by Zhu Lin

There is an unnamed nunnery situated in Siwa Village in Aba County, Sichuan Province. Every year on October 2, the nuns here perform a Tibetan Opera, *Songtsan Gambo,* on a stage erected on the open grassland. After many years this has become a tradition and the opera commemorates the historic marriage of the Tang-dynasty Princess Wencheng to the Tibetan King Songtsan Gambo.

Only the elder locals know what the name of the river is. When the infrequent cross country bus stops here, the conductor announces, "The Nunnery! You've arrived at the Nunnery." Because of the nunnery, no one cares about the name of the river.

Our car left the highway and drove up the macadam road. We crawled toward the nunnery moving slow as a yak. All of us wore sunglasses including the driver. The scene of the prayer streamers erected on poles stretching high into the clouds and the gorgeous temple building attracted us even from a great distance.

Along the riverbank the flat land was carpeted in green, luxuriant grass. The nuns spread their washed kasaya casually on the grass. Opening their red umbrellas to ward off the scorching noon sun, they read, their faces crimson under the red umbrellas.

Our car came to a halt. Leaving the car we took out our cameras. Amazed at the scenery, we walked to the river. Tibetan boys herding yaks on the far shore dashed on horseback towards the river, curious about us guests from afar. One of the boys greeted us with exaggerated arm waving. We responded by returning their gestures. This drew laughter

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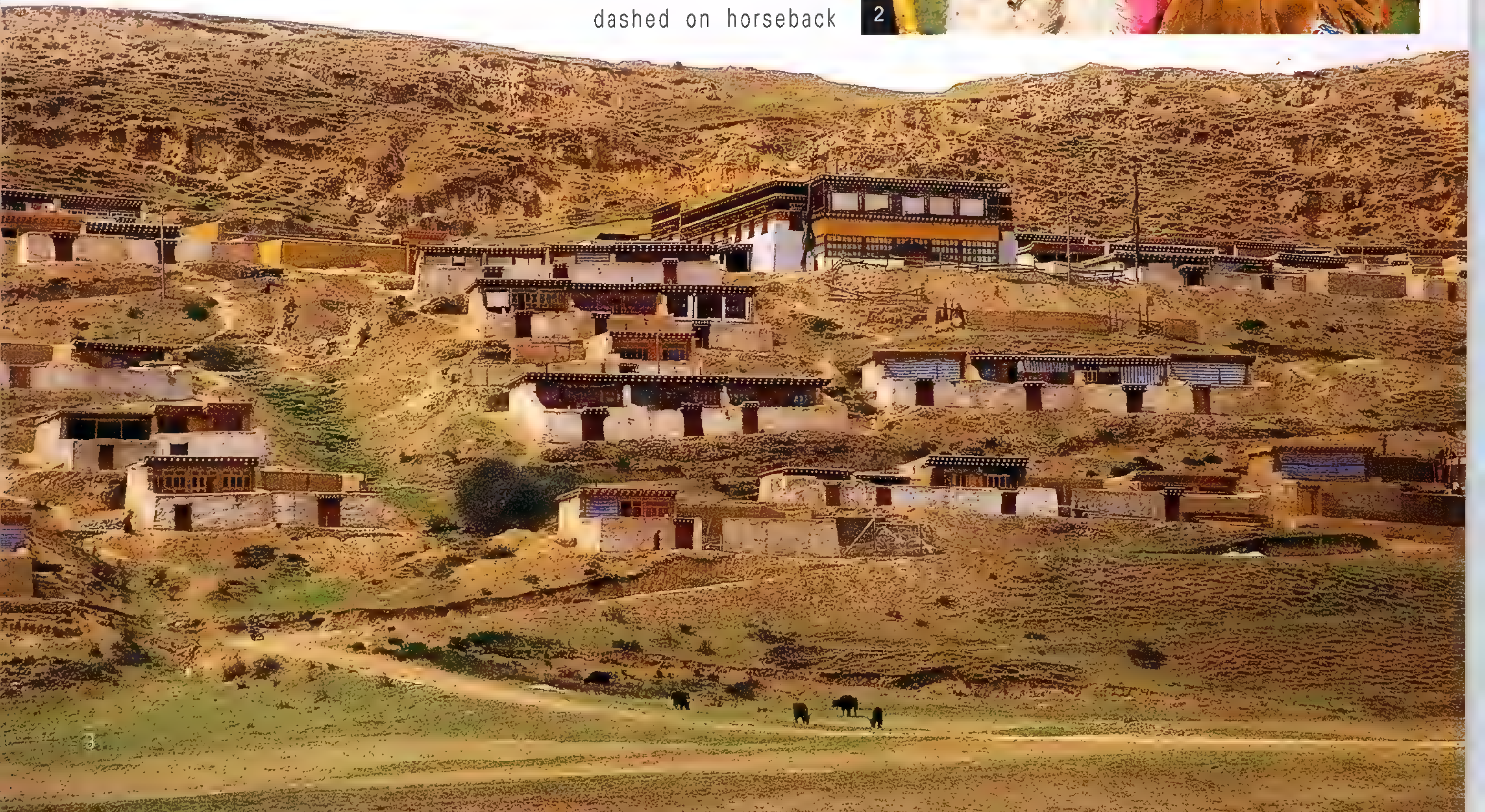

from the boys across the river who laughed so hard mimicking us they nearly fell off their horses.

Encountering Zhuoma, a Unique Young Woman

There was laughter coming from under the red umbrellas too. Under one, I saw big crystal clear bright eyes looking into my camera lens. After I taking several close-ups of her, I learned her name was Zhuoma. I found to my surprise she spoke fluent Han Chinese. She told me she was from a well-to-do family in a remote county seat. When I asked why she came here to become a nun, she hesitated to give me an immediate answer. With a smile, she asked, "What would you guess?"

Seeing my perplexed expression, she answered, "To learn Tibetan Opera." So that was why she had left home and come to this nunnery. Before I could digest her words, she left for the riverside. Kneeling with one knee on the soft grass, she ladled water into a bucket. I walked up to her and scooped river water with my hands. The cool water tasted sweet and refreshing. When I admired the water, she laughed again, her exposed face red from the colour of her Kasaya.

Bearing the bucket on her back, she walked along the trail to the nunnery. I followed her. My fellow travellers were waiting for us on the square in front of the nunnery. I introduced Zhuoma to them and she nodded to them smiling. She then led us to her courtyard looking elegant and charming with the load of water on her strong back.

Visiting the Nuns' Residence

Pushing open the unlocked door, Zhuoma shouted in Tibetan inside the house, a two-story wooden building of the typical Tibetan architectural style. The ground floor storeroom had no outer door. An unfamiliar tree grew in the corner of the wall, its sparse leaves adding to the beautiful atmosphere of the courtyard. We climbed a ladder made of a single log to the first floor balcony made of rammed earth. From here we saw the distant snow-capped mountains with yaks and sheep grazing on the slopes. Prayer flags fluttered and crackled in the wind.

Hearing music coming from Zhuoma's room, I hastily removed my shoes and entered. A boiling kettle of water on an electric stove in the center of the room, sent up a cloud of steam. Zhuoma asked us to sit and began to make tea proceeding at her own carefree pace and humming *A Mother's Daughter*. I looked out the window and saw a film ad pasted by a portrait of Panchen Lama.

After the meal, Zhuoma led us to a slope where the nuns pitched tents. "Tomorrow we commemorate October 2, when in 641, the Tang-dynasty Princess Wencheng entered Tibet. The nunnery performs the opera Songtsan Gambo every year on this day and spends several months preparing for the coming show." She began to sing her song *A Mother's Daughter* again, and her face reflecting the wonderful feelings in her heart.

Dusk approached. The nuns were bathed in the golden rays of the setting sun as they happily pitched tents on the slope. I felt lucky to meet them and photograph their lives. That evening, all the nuns crowded into Zhuoma's small room. They went through their final rehearsal singing their parts in the opera.

The Audience Gathers on the Slope

Early the next morning, the temple horns sounded, and I was awakened from a dream. Outside my window the vast grassland was veiled in morning mists and fog floated in a belt around the mountain slopes. Groups of Tibetans in their festive best walked toward the nunnery. The older people and women among them spun their prayer wheels with one hand and held their beads in the other as they recited the Six Words Sutra.

1. All the male roles are played by nuns.
2. Actresses backstage having fun.
3. Temple houses of the nunnery in harmony with the scenery spread across the grassland.
4. The highland sunlight is good for sun drying and sterilising.
5. Inside one of the nuns' rooms.

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A square enclosure of cloth created a backstage around the newly erected columns where the nuns put on make-up. Stage props were made of tables and benches from the nuns' rooms. Degan Wangmu's recording of the song *Xiangbala Is Not Far Away* was played over the loudspeakers set out facing slope.

People arrived from all directions and sat in a circle on the ground. Some peddled their hand-made farm tools, ceramics and other daily necessities. An old man made his choice carefully. Behind him, stood the goat that he planned to release into the wilderness.

A monk arrived walking at a deliberate pace with a big tape recorder. Close to the stage, he set down his machine and readied the tape. A few nuns served hot tea.

It's for You, Photographer

Zhuoma and other actresses were dressing and putting on make-up backstage. The king, ministers, envoys, and guards stuck on curved moustaches. The tall, strong nun playing Songtsan Gambo wore sunglasses and looked like a pop singer. Zhuoma playing Princess Wencheng wore heavy makeup and her face was as red as the setting sun.

When I walked up to Zhuoma she seemed embarrassed. Zhuoma was unique among the nuns. Her beautiful eyes expressed a melancholy and yearning for the outside world that none of the others seemed to have. Then the bugles blew. The opera was about to begin.

Suddenly, Zhuoma ran to me and handed me a book, its pages yellowed from long use. "This is for you, photographer,"she said. "Photographer" was her name for me. The book was by the playwright of the Tibetan Opera, *Songtsan Gambo*. Obviously it was Zhuoma's treasure. I hesitated to take it.

Excellent Performance on the Grassland

The opera is in seven acts, including "The Tibetan King Ascending the Throne", "Studying Buddhism in India", "Asking for the Permission to Marry the Princess of the Tang Empire"and "Grand Celebration". It is a combination of drama, songs and dances. The clothes and stage props the nuns make are simple but creative. The actresses are devoted performers. The between acts clown, always drew hearty laughs. When Princess Wencheng came on stage, the audience was hushed. Zhuoma not only represented the beautiful looking Great Tang princess, but also displayed her own depth of character. Many on-lookers murmured their admiration.

When the opera reached its climax, Songtsan Gambo sang: "When Sakyamuni was born, he moved seven steps forward to become the sage of the world. I bow to the intelligent Buddha and worship his pure image of gold and jade. The Buddha's wisdom is like a gold mountain; its great honour is embeded for future generations. Converting to you means peace forever." The play ended with the minister, Gar, presenting to Songtsan Gambo letters and gifts that he

brought from the Tang Empire. The nuns sang in Tibetan. It is hard to imagine that nuns who are usually busy reciting sutras and studying could give such a lively singing and dancing performance. Their natural style of singing was as refreshing as the wind on the grassland. Showing appreciation the Tibetan audience screamed at the top of their lungs.

Singing with the Nuns

The show ended and most of the onlookers dispersed. The actresses retreated backstage to change out of their male costumes and remove their mustaches. Zhuoma was the only one reluctant to change back, preferring to remain Princess Wencheng a while longer. When the other nuns ate their meal, Zhuoma remained standing at the centre of the stage. I was wondered what was the matter when Pengcuo Lamo, the young abbot, said in her heavy Tibetan accent "She will be alright." After presenting me with a bowl of yogurt with ginseng fruit, Pengcuo Lamo told me more about Zhuoma. "She is a girl full of dreams, she said. "Her father is a Han Chinese who married her mother a talented singer and dancer and Tibetan beauty. But before Zhuoma was born, her father left and returned to his hometown in the hinterland of China. Zhuoma has been interested in Han and Tibetan cultures since childhood and dreams of becoming an actress. Of the nuns here she works hardest at learning Tibetan Opera."

Having their fill of milk, tea and yogurt, my fellow travellers wanted to have a singing party with the nuns. Although excited, the women lamas worried about breaking the rules of the nunnery. Pengcuo Lamo unexpectedly gave permission and suggested Zhuoma lead the singing.

I didn't notice when Zhuoma had changed clothes and reentered the tent. Pointing at me, she said, "You sing first." I agreed and sang the song The Girl Dawa Zhuoma, which I dedicated to Zhuoma. I wished that the world Zhuoma dreamed about be as beautiful as that described in the song: "Last night, I dreamed of the bright moon. When I woke up, I saw the beautiful Dawa Zhuoma. Summer breeze stirs the green water of Dragon King's Pool, while smiling sun chrysanthemums bloom in the forest...."

Zhuoma was overjoyed to hear a Han woman sing a Tibetan song so well. The other nuns looked at me through different eyes now. Then, with Zhuoma taking the lead, we sang one song after another.

The moonlight was unusually charming. We sang with the nuns in the tent until we finished all the songs we knew. I ate a lot of yogurt, jerky and zanba (a Tibetan snack made of baked qingke flour). My encounter with the nuns made an unforgettable impression on me. Since then, I often think about them and their nunnery.

Their lifestyle fills us city dwellers with envy. Under the blue sky, they dream freely, and in their Tibetan Opera performance, they realise their ideals.

Translated by G. S.

1. With simple props, the nuns dressed themselves up for various roles.
2. You don't need a ticket to go to this outdoor theatre on the grassland.
3. A scene in the opera *Songtsan Gambo*.
4. A lama watching the opera performance.
5. Lama musicians playing for the performance

The King of the Nest in Kunming

Photos & article by Li Zhixiong

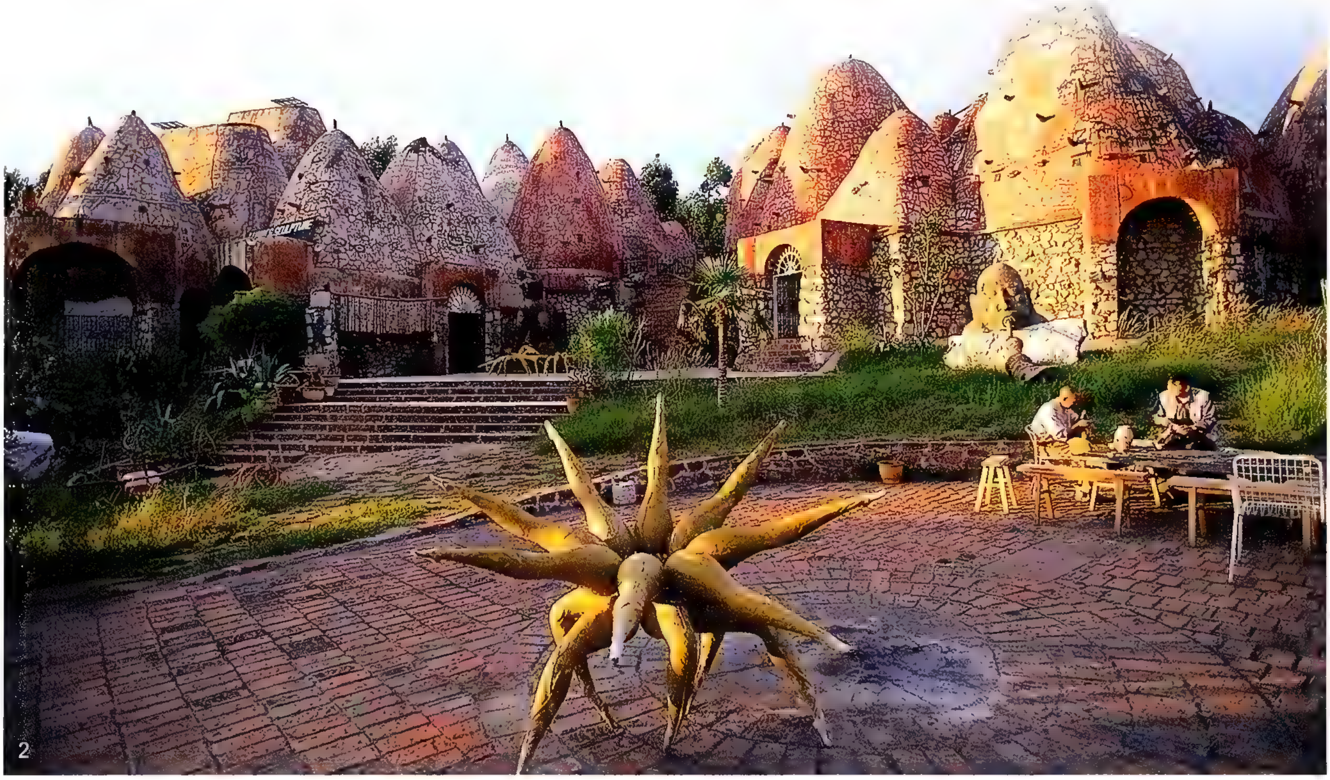
Carrying a three-metre bamboo pole, he built his traditional earthen nest house on a beautiful scenic field in Kunming. Here he is sometimes a king, sometimes a mere citizen. In this kingdom, everything is in natural primitive harmony, and life is enchanting.

Stimulation of Group Sculptures

I watched his ants' nest structure grow taller day by day. Every time I passed by it, I couldn't help casting glances at it. It is a house that looks like the kilns the locals use for burning lime, except it is prettier. Later on, more and more cars stopped before the nest house and it got more and more visitors. I couldn't resist the impulse to take a good look at it for myself.

The "king" living in this nest kingdom is an artist called Luo Xu. He got his primary school education by attending a day school taking with him a straw mat and a textbook. He once dreamed of becoming an architect, but finding that he was not good at maths, he gave it up. At the age of 23, he began to learn drawing from some "bad elements" — people with political problems. He was refused twice by art colleges for failing the enterance examinations. Later he was accepted as a private student by Qian Shaowu, the dean of the Sculpture Department of the Central Academy of Fine Arts. Then, he studied one year of human body sculpture.

Supported by a bank trust, he based his house plans on his little son's drawing of an ideal kingdom, and came to build his empire on the Anshi roadside in the eastern suburb eight kilometres from Kunming, the capital city of Yunnan Province. He had no blueprints for the construction and no measuring tape. Following his son's naive drawing and his understanding of ant's nests, he measured and laid out the plot with a three-metre pole. He climbed a tree to direct the workers drawing lines with lime on the ground, and stayed up there like a monkey most of the day, squinting his eyes to see the results. After the basement was



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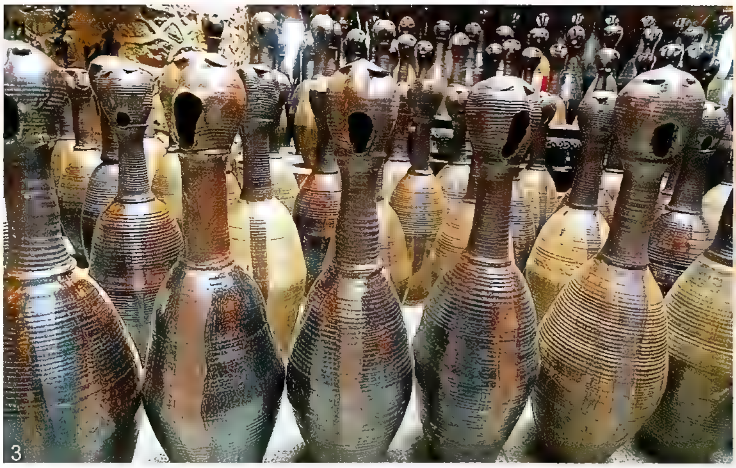
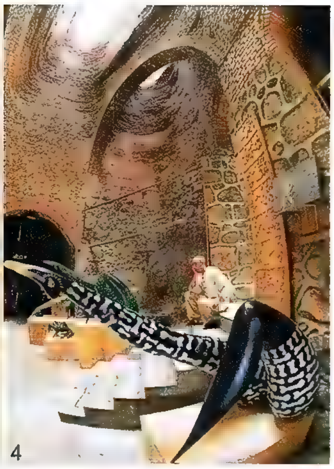




completed, the house grew taller yard by yard. When it could not go up any further, he located on the ground, using his naked eyes, a point to place another post to support the vault. His "indigenous nest" was built completely with red bricks produced locally without even using a single steel bar or nail, and only huge rocks to do the foundation. Each floor is over five metres high, and the entire building is a vaulted structure with perfect ventilation and large spaces. It is warm in winter and cool in summer.

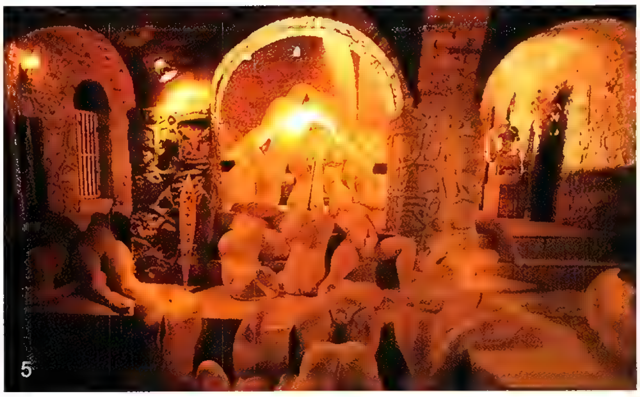
A Home as if a Sculptural Museum

Entering Luo Xu's "kingdom", you will be astonished by his homestead of over 2,000 square metres. Sculptures of various styles are placed everywhere in his garden, goats and rabbits run around freely, and the "indigenous nest house" in the bright sunshine and white clouds, somewhat give you a feeling of not being in China.

His drawing room is a big hall of over 200 square metres consisting of many vaults. This spacious place is decorated like a sculpture museum, and there is a group sculpture called *Choir* that he recently finished. Clay pottery singing figures are made in many shapes, each singing her favourite song. When the mood strikes him Luo Xu joins in with the pottery figures, baton in hand. No matter whether it is an *Ode to Joy* or *Fate*, Luo Xu and his *Choir* are completely absorbed in their performance.

With his instinctivly natural impulses and inspired by other living creatures, Luo Xu is extremely creative and full of marvelous ideas. "Women's thighs are most fascinating to me. When our Mother Nature created women, their heads were made into super transmitters, and their torsos into supermarkets or grocery stores; but the leg is a wonderfully designed work of art. It's beautiful, actually one of the most beautiful creations of nature. He expressed his views on the thighs of women as I stopped before a spider and dragonfly he created using the shape of women's thighs.

The art work in his exhibition room has been created over the years. There is a series called *The Bull and Woman* which looks like human beings yet are only suggestive of human shapes, a sculpture of Buddha named *Oriental Tang Man*, which looks like a book from heaven or an authentic Buddhist scripture that can be understood only by a Buddhist. Others are the *99th Flood Peak*, *Callas and Tulips* and the *Board of Directors*. They are all thrilling to look at.



The King and His Ideas

The dining room in Luo Xu's house is above the drawing room and can be reached by a flight of stone steps. Eating the vegetables grown in his garden and rice noodles cooked with chicken — his specialty — is a rare and valuable enjoyment, like a meal savoured in an old French castle. His study, where the furniture is in imitation of the Medieval Age, contains many books on art from around the world, and a large variety of folk art collections. In front of the fireplace warmed by a blaze, a glass of wine in hand and with peace of mind, Luo Xu told me stories of his life. He told of raising donkeys and goats, of generations of people moving around in the fields near his hometown leading a life governed by man and nature, of city people in obtaining their knowledge living year after year in cages. He went on about how city folk created group after group of white cages "imprisoning" others endlessly. He said what he does now is actually an ant's work, more or less, and he has to work much harder than what people do in the city.

Seeing his expression when he talked about water, I assumed that the subject of the next group of sculptures must be related to water. Yes, Luo Xu is fully deserved to be called the "King of the Nest".

Translated by L. Yu

1. **Luo Xu, a man with many strange and marvelous ideas.**
2. **The "Ideal Kingdom" designed according to his little son's drawing.**
3. **The *Choir* organised by Luo Xu that has moved many musicians and singers to tears.**
4. **Luo Xu and his *Series of the Thigh*.**
5. **The *99th Flood Peak*.**

At the Col of Mount Tanggula

Photo & article by Feng Yanjun

After leaving Golmud in Qinghai Province, we went to Mount Kunlun. At about one in the afternoon, we reached the No.1 Bridge of the Source of the Yangtse River, the Togton River Bridge, via the Qinghai-Tibet Highway. As the 500-metre-wide Togton River is shallow, a few beaches have formed and are connected to each other resembling an expansive plain without mountains or vegetation. To the west, the end of one of the Togton's tributaries becomes the source of the Yangtse. This meandering river flows quietly along the boundless earth in the east. The usual concrete entrance gate is a hit tourist spot because of the large Chinese characters for "No. 1 Bridge of the Source of the Yangtse" painted on the right-hand-side of the first pillar.

As we headed south, the Qinghai-Tibet Highway straightened out and I truly felt we were on the "Roof of the World". As the sunlight dimmed, we became nervous and worried that we might miss the sunset at Tanggula Mountain Pass. The driver, however, was confident and reassured us.

Just as he promised, the sun turned yellowish and we saw a dark mountain lying in front of us. Our car turned slowly eastward in a wide arc and then proceeded south. Then we found that among the mountain ranges, there was a big col, from where the highway stretches onward. We stopped at this col, known as the famous Tanggula Mountain Pass.

Some grotesque peaks resembling giant fingers seemed to hold the pale yellow sun in the west. The col is about 1,000 metres wide. On the west side of the highway stood a square stone stele 10-plus metres high, while another rose five to six metres south of it. East of the road and towards the north, there was a huge stone human figure, with the words "Tanggula Mountain Pass, 5,231 metres above sea level" carved on it. Streamers with sutra scriptures and prayers written on them hung everywhere around the stone stele and figure. The freshness of the red and green colours had already faded. The place was so windy that it was difficult to keep one's eyes open.

The mountain range east of the col was comparatively flat, with rounded peaks. Snow covered the upper part of the mountain like swans' down. Below the snowline, withered grasses grew straggled. To the northeast was a lake the colour of the sky. Only a few streams of white clouds broke the azure blue overhead. At sunset, the shadows of the earth and mountain merged to create a scene like something from an exotic painting. Then, in a flash, the brightness in the east faded, and the land took on a dark camel colour. Where the sun had dropped below the horizon, some colourful clouds appeared, casting a graceful silhouette on the mountains. The best way we could praise such a beautiful scene was to take as many photographs as possible, to capture and remember it forever.

Aftertaste of True Friendship

Article by Li Zhaoji

A few summers ago, a colleague and I took a business trip to Harbin, Heilongjiang Province. There, I made friends with a lovely little girl. Although I have no contact with her now, I still remember our pure friendship.

After the conference on the first day of the trip, my colleague and I went to taste some local snacks near the old district on Tuoyu Road in the gap. However, we could not communicate very well with one of the hawkers. Fortunately, a young girl stepped in to help us. Afterwards, we started talking. The 18-year-old girl was called Xiao Wei, and she worked as an attendant.

We finished our work very early the next day. Since we had some free time, we called Xiao Wei. She promised to apply for early leave that day to became our tour guide. Accompanied by her, we visited many scenic spots. We had a vegetarian meal in the Jile (Extremely Happy) Temple, viewed ice-sculptures in Zhaolin Park, visited the Flood-prevention Garden, went shopping in the local bazaar, soaked up the jubilant atmosphere of Central Boulevard, and took pictures at the St. Sophia Cathedral.

This metropolis in Northeast China has a charm that cannot be found in South China's cities. When she realised that our taxi driver had made a detour because we were not familiar with the roads, Xiao Wei almost fought with him. At supper, she tried to pay the bill secretly, but I stopped her in time. The meal may have only cost about 100 yuan, but it could be a few days' pay for her. Lodging in a hostel provided by her company, Xiao Wei returned home only once a month. So, she may have sacrificed her annual leave to come out with us.

I have been on business trips several times and have learned to make friends carefully. But Xiao Wei was a true friend to me. I really hope that God will always bless her and protect her from danger. And I hope I can meet her again some day!

Every Coin Has Two Sides

Photo & article by Lin Xueqiang

Having misunderstood and believed that there was no need to secure a visa to go from Spain to Morocco, I was not allowed to land when my cruise ship arrived in Tanger. All I could do was wait for a few hours and return to Algeciras in Spain by boat.

Algeciras is a southern port city of Spain. Although not developed for tourism, it has its own special appeal. A small city, it features hostels whose owners wear casual expressions but are quite friendly to tourists, humorous tavern staff in the cafes, friendly, inebriated drinkers in the bar, the famous Spanish snack of Tapita, and so on. All of which make you fall in love with this place.

I travelled on to more major cities on the Mediterranean. In Malaga, where the painter Picasso was born, I tasted a kind of shellfish. I had to use a sharp knife to cut it in two, picking out the unwanted parts, adding much lemon juice, and eating it raw. It tasted truly fresh. In Granada, I lodged in a guesthouse which I believe was the best one of the whole trip, and made friends with the owner, Chris. Through him, I could taste inexpensive and delicious red wine. In Albaicin, an ancient city of the Arabians, I tried an appetising local dish called Sacromonte omelette. Moreover, in a place which the locals called "Lesser Morocco", I had an authentic local Moroccan dinner, and appreciated a show called Flamenco of Tablao. I also trekked along the beautiful mountains in Granada, gazing at the snow-capped mountains from afar.

Every coin has two sides. It is not always clear whether every encounter is a blessing or a misfortune, whether in our trips or in our lives.

Paradise in Switzerland

Article by Jenny Lai

Longing to travel alone, during a 10-day journey to Spain, I arranged another 10-day tour to Switzerland by myself. Compared to other European countries, the Swiss are more peaceful and simple.

Taking a night bus from Barcelona, I reached Zurich, capital city of Switzerland after 13 hours. My first destination was St. Moritz, the setting off point of the Glacier Express. The express passed through lots of picturesque places as described in the tour guidebooks, though they were not special for me since I had already seen glaciers before. The whole trip of the Express lasted eight hours, but I only choose the part offering the best views which took five hours. The Express would stop in Lauterbrunne, a small village in the middle of Switzerland.

Before arriving in Lauterbrunne, I selected some hotels referred to in the guidebooks, wishing to have a rest as soon as I got off the train. In February, the sky of Switzerland began to turn dark at about six in the evening. When I found there were only a few dim lights and not many people on the street, I felt anxious. Then I saw a road sign for "Valley Hostel". Though it was not one I had planned to lodge in, my body was weary, so I decided to stay there. Lying under the warm blanket, I recalled how I had been surrounded by darkness and cool wind just two hours before. Having been received by the hospitable female owner of the hostel, I took a hot bath, washing away the tiredness of the past two days. It was bliss to have a person's basic needs so satisfied.

My spirits were excellent when I woke the next day. Since I had no need to change lodgings, I felt exceptionally at ease. In just a 23-minute vehicle tour from Lauterbrunne, one can reach Interlaken, another place leading to Jungfraujoch. As a town, Interlaken is more crowded than Lauterbrunne, and it is also the setting off point for touring Bayern (Bavaria), Luzern, and other villages at the foot of Jungfraujoch. I took the train to other places every day and bought something to make a meal in the hotel at night. After dinner I sat in the living room, leisurely checking my e-mails.

All the people I met in Switzerland were nice. I was allowed much time to think during the trip. Visiting scenic spots or purchasing special souvenirs are certainly ideal experiences, but meeting the local people is the most unforgettable memory of a journey. It reminds us we are all from one world, and we have to treasure our acquaintances.

My First Tour

Article by Lu Feng

It has become common to take DIY trips to the mainland since the 1980s. Though I was only little during my first trip, a 10-day tour to East China with my family, I still remember it all clearly.

It was very economical to take a train, but sometimes it was a "soul-stirring" experience. Once when our train arrived at a station, a big crowd on the platform rushed at the train cars from all directions. Seeing these unexpected guests, we quickly closed the windows to prevent them from climbing inside. We were not "released" until the train started off again. Afterwards, we became more attentive when the trained arrived at each station.

At the time we reached Hangzhou, the city had just been hit by a typhoon and the place was a mess. We could hardly find a cheap hotel to lodge in. Unfortunately, the electricity in the hotel we did find was severely inadequate. Besides, since water had penetrated into the corridor, we had to stand aside a street to wash our faces and brush our teeth. As a child, I thought this funny behaviour was a way to experience the lifestyle of the locals.

On another day, we made a new joke while having lunch at the Tiger Running Pool scenic area. The menu included a dish called "Guifei Jichi" (Imperial Concubine Chicken Wings). Attracted by the beautiful name and suffering extreme hunger, we misunderstood the name to be "Stewed Chicken with Shark's Fin", and it was cheap! In Mandarin, though "ji" means chicken and "chi" means shark's fin, when the two characters are put together, they merely mean "chicken wings". We all broke into laughter when the dish was served.

When touring Shanghai, we seldom took any transport but walked instead to stay within our budget and rested at the roadside when tired, which made me feel uneasy when sleeping at night.

Nevertheless, even the most bitter experiences of the past are sweet memories in my heart today.

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PHOTOGRAPHING YOUR HOMETOWN

SEEING THE FAMILIAR IN NEW WAYS

Photos & article by Robert Jerome

Robert Jerome is a New York-based photographer who has travelled extensively. In his 25-year career, he has visited over 60 countries. Religious ceremonies and other aspects of local life with a strong ethnic flavour are his favourite subjects. He shares some of his photography tips below.

Travel photographs do not have to be limited to foreign destinations. Some of the best travel photographs are often created in one s own hometown. However, the freshness of vision we feel when we visit a new destination is sometimes dulled in our hometowns; we are often so familiar with our surroundings that we find them mundane and uninteresting. By looking at your hometown from a photographic point of view, however, you may actually find yourself reconnecting with your everyday surroundings with the excitement of a wide-eyed tourist.

My hometown, New York City, shares with Hong Kong a number of common characteristics: both are centres of business, culture and entertainment, and both have been photographed innumerable times. Is it possible to create photographs that reflect new visions of our hometowns?

The followings are some tips to create compelling photographs of your hometown:

Tip 1

Create a visual story. Most of us are able to describe our hometown in words. Challenge yourself to tell the story of your hometown in pictures rather than words. Photograph a variety of subjects to tell your story: buildings and monuments, people at work and at play, and celebrations that make your hometown distinctive.

Tip 2

Photograph familiar sights in new ways. Look at postcards of your hometown and attempt to photograph the well-known subject matter depicted in the postcards from different angles or from new and more creative perspectives.

Tip 3

Photograph the same scene at different times of the year, in different types of weather or in different types of light. One of the chief

2

3

4

advantages a resident has over a tourist in terms of photography is that we can return to the same scene repeatedly. It is remarkable how the appearance of a scene can change as the environment changes.

Tip 4

Photograph ethnic neighbourhoods and festivals to give a sense of the diversity of your hometown. For example, most tourists to New York flock to Broadway, the Statue of Liberty, Wall Street and Central Park. However, New York is also Chinatown, Little Italy, the Russian community in Brighton Beach, the Indian community in the borough of Queens, and a host of other ethnic neighbourhoods. Photographs of these areas can capture a sense of life in New York City that photographs of standard tourist attractions cannot.

Tip 5

Search out and photograph small details that provide a sense of the spirit of your hometown. With your camera ready, simply stroll through your hometown, preferably areas not usually frequented by tourists. A powerful photograph is a lucky combination of subject matter, light and timing, so keep your eyes open and you will be amazed at the photographic opportunities that your hometown can present.

Tip 6

The biggest challenge to photographing your hometown is overcoming inertia. As tourists, when we visit a new destination, we know we have only a limited amount of time to create photographs, so we carefully schedule visits to the all sights we are interested in. In photographing your hometown, however, there is always the feeling of "I can photograph it tomorrow". Because our hometowns, especially large cities, are in a constant state of change, it is never wise to procrastinate in your photographic mission. By maintaining a constant "photographic relationship" with your surroundings, you can create not only a visual story of your hometown but, as your town changes, you can preserve a visual history as well.

1. Photographing the Manhattan skyline through the girders of the Brooklyn Bridge provides a new perspective on a familiar scene.
2. A city is the sum of all its neighborhoods. Chinatown is a vibrant and integral part of life in Manhattan.
3. Photographing people at work and at play can capture a sense of everyday life in your hometown. This picture depicts commuters arriving at Grand Central Station on their way to work in New York.
4. Never procrastinate in photographing your hometown since change is inevitable and often can be swift and dramatic. I travelled to the top of World Trade Centre many times to capture views of New York City that most likely will never be available to photographers again.
5.6. Central Park in winter and spring, two very different seasons result in two very different photographs.

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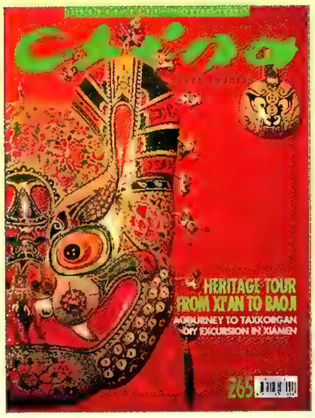
6



Readership Survey

China Tourism always appreciates feedback from its readers. In accordance with your suggestions, we have recently added a variety of new columns. Still, we need to know more of your opinions, including criticisms and suggestions. Please take a couple of minutes to complete this questionnaire and return it to us. Thank you!

Please give your evaluation of the stories in this issue and your overall impression of *China Tourism*.

	Excellent	Good	Average	Fair	Poor
Xi'an — Baoji: A 21st Century Trip	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Journey to the Taohua River	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
A Trip to Taxkorgan in Xinjiang	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The Nun Opera Singers in Aba	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The King of the Nest in Kunming	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Others: ______________________	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

	Excellent	Good	Average	Fair	Poor
Photographs	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Cover	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Articles	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Tips for the Traveller	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Art Design	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Other Opinions: ____

____

Name: (Mr/Ms/Mrs) ____
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Are you happy with the factual content of *China Tourism*? ☐ Yes ☐ No

What are your suggestions for improvement?

____

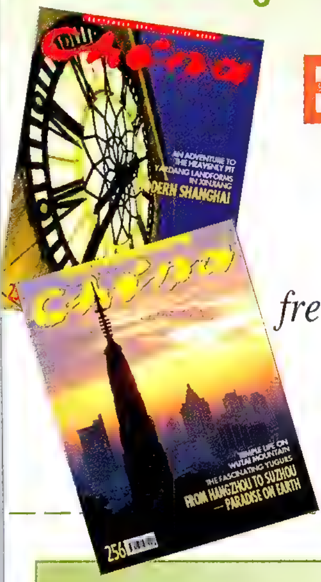
Thank you for taking the time to fill in this questionnaire. It provides us with invaluable feedback which will help us improve *China Tourism* magazine for you.

*Please mail this questionnaire to our office at 24/F, Westlands Centre, 20 Westlands Road, Quarry Bay, Hong Kong, or fax to (852) 2561 8196.

English Edition

China

CHINA TOURISM



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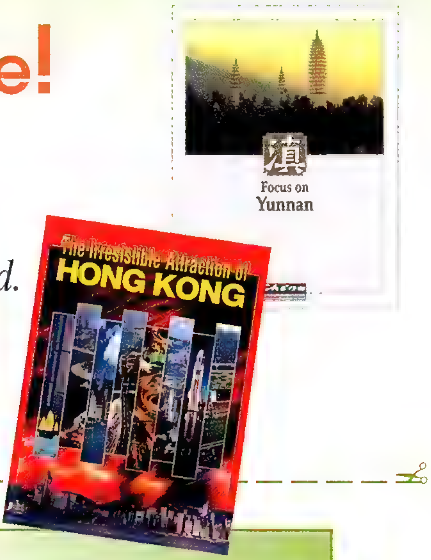

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Hotels in Xi'an

Name	Star	Address	Tel (029)	Fax (029)
Hyatt Regency Xi'an	*****	158 East Street	7231234	7216799
Grand Castle Hotel	****	12 West Sect. Huancheng Rd S	7231800	7231500
Sheraton Xi'an	*****	12 Fenggao Rd	4261888	4262188
Shangri-La Golden Flower Hotel	*****	8 Changle Rd W	3232981	3235477
Hotel Royal	****	334 East Street	7235311	7235887
Grand New World Hotel	****	48 Lianhu Rd	7216868	7219754
Garden Hotel Tang Hua	****	4 Dongyangyin Rd, Dayan Pagoda	5261111	5261778
Le Garden Hotel	****	8 Laodong Rd S	4263388	4263288
Bell Tower Hotel	***	South West Corner of Bell Tower	7279200	7218767
Xi'an Hotel	***	26 North Sect. Of Chang'an Rd	5261351	5261759
Empress Hotel	***	45 Xingqing Rd	3232999	3236988
Sino Pearl Hotel	***	8 South Sect. Of Huancheng Rd E	3233888	3235962
Jianguo Hotel	***	20 Jinhua Rd S	3238888	3235145
Wannian Hotel Xi'an	***	11B Changle Rd C	3231932	3235460
City Hotel Xi'an	***	5 South St	7219988	7216688
Qin Dynasty Hotel Xi'an	***	55 North Sect. of Huancheng Rd W	7212718	7212728
Tangcheng Hotel Xi'an	***	3 South Sect. of Hanguang Rd	5265711	5261041
Xi'an People's Hotel	***	319 Dongxin St	7215111	7218152
China Merchants Hotel Xi'an	***	131 Heping Rd	7218988	7218588
Orient Hotel	***	Xiaozhai Rd W	5262211	5261768
Empress Hotel	***	45 Xingqing Rd	3232999	3236988
Qomolangma Hotel Xi'an	**	55 Youyi Rd E	7211980	
Jiefang Hotel	**	181 Jiefang Rd	7423829	7422617
Hawaii Hotel Xi'an	**	54 Youyi Rd E	7251288	7251128
Shaanxi Sports Hotel	**	Inside the Shaanxi Sports Stadium	7251344	
Jiefang Hotel Xi'an	**	Railway Station Square	7212927	7212617
Northwest Hotel Xi'an	**	Youyi St, Weiqu Town	5292191	

Flights to and from Xi'an

Route	Days	Dep.	Arr.	Flight
Beijing — Xi'an	1 2 3 4 5 6	1420	1605	CA1201
	1 2 3 4 5 6	1940	2120	CA1205
	1 2 3 4 5 6	1000	1145	CA1209
	1 2 3 4 5 6	0730	0915	CA1215
	1 3 5 7	1410	1600	CA1225
	1 2 3 4 5 6	1220	1355	CA1223
Xi'an — Beijing	1 2 3 4 5 6	1715	1855	CA1201
	1 2 3 4 5 6	0800	0940	CA1205
	1 2 3 4 5 6	1240	1420	CA1209
	1 2 3 4 5 6	1540	1720	CA1216
	1 2 3 4 5 6	1510	1650	CA1223
Chengdu — Xi'an	1 4 6	1250	1415	CA1421
	1 2 3 4 5 6	2100	2200	WH2401
	1 2 4 6 7	0725	0835	SZ4203
	1 2 4 5 6	0825	0915	3U 201
	3 7	0815	0910	3U 615
	2 7	1800	1910	XW 237
	7	1235	1750	SC 627
	1 3 5 7	1900	2020	2Z 407
	1 3 5 7	1045	1255	2Z 409
Xi'an — Chengdu	1 4 6	1040	1145	CA1421
	1 2 3 4 5 6	1900	2010	WH2401
	2 3 5 6 7	1955	2055	SZ4204
	1 2 4 5 6	1340	1500	3U 201
	3 7	1925	2030	3U 616
	2 7	1540	1655	XW 237
	7	1125	1150	SC 627
	1 3 5 7	1710	1820	2Z 407
	1 3 5 7	0800	1015	2Z 409
Fukuoka — Xi'an	1 3 5	1440	1930	WH 289
Xi'an — Fukuoka	1 3 5	0900	1330	WH 289
Guangyuan — Xi'an	1 3 5 7	1155	1255	2Z 409
Xi'an — Guangyuan	1 3 5 7	0800	0955	2Z 409
Haikou — Xi'an	2 4 6	2010	2250	WH2317
	1	1400	1800	WH2387
	1 2 3 4 5 6	0740	1145	CZ3203
	1 2 3 4 5 6	0810	1040	HU7167
	1 3 5 7	0805	1150	HU7267
	7	0825	1310	HU7467
Xi'an — Haikou	2 4 6	1650	1930	WH2317
	1	0845	1320	WH2387
	1 2 3 4 5 6	1240	1650	CZ3203
	1 2 3 4 5 6	1505	1750	HU7167
	1 3 5 7	1235	1615	HU7267
	7	1355	1825	HU7467
Hong Kong — Xi'an	1 2 3 4 5 6	1800	2020	WH 203
	2 4 6	1210	1430	WH 207
	1 3 5	0745	1030	KA 940

Route	Days	Dep.	Arr.	Flight
Xi'an — Hong Kong	1 2 3 4 5 6	1430	1700	WH 203
	2 4 6	0850	1110	WH 207
	1 3 5	1130	1415	KA 940
Kiigata — Xi'an	3 6	1515	2125	WH 295
Xi'an — Kiigata	3 6	0845	1425	WH 295
Macao — Xi'an	1 2 3 4 5 6	1825	2155	WH 205
Xi'an — Macao	1 2 3 4 5 6	1335	1725	WH 205
Nagoya — Xi'an	1 2 3 4 5 6	1435	2000	WH 291
	2 6	0830	1410	WH 298
	2 3 4 6 7	1440	2010	WH 273
Xi'an — Nagoya	1 2 3 4 5 6	0820	1330	WH 291
	1 5	1420	1940	WH 297
	2 3 4 6 7	0800	1340	WH 273
Nanjing — Xi'an	5 7	1655	1855	WH2865
	2	0840	1030	WH2871
	3 6	1420	1620	WH2881
	1 4	1250	1445	WH2881
	1 2 3 4 5 6	0900	1040	MU5233
	2 5	1510	1700	XO9535
Xi'an — Nanjing	5 7	1935	2115	WH2865
	2	1740	1935	WH2871
	3 6	2135	2320	WH2881
	1 4	1950	2140	WH2881
	1 2 3 4 5 6	1120	1250	MU5233
	2 5	1240	1425	XO9535
Seoul — Xi'an	1 5	1310	1605	WH 283
	2 6	0930	1240	OZ 319
Xi'an — Seoul	1 5	0930	1210	WH 283
	2 6	1340	1625	OZ 319
Shenzhen — Xi'an	1 2 3 4 5 6	1255	1515	WH2325
	1 2 3 4 5 6	1410	1635	CZ3251
	1 2 3 4 5 6	0930	1145	CZ3257
	1 2 3 4 5 6	1230	1450	ZH 835
Xi'an — Shenzhen	1 2 3 4 5 6	0955	1210	WH2325
	1 2 3 4 5 6	1720	1940	CZ3251
	1 2 3 4 5 6	1225	1440	CZ3257
	1 2 3 4 5 6	1530	1755	ZH 835
Xiamen — Xi'an	2 4 6	1510	1905	WH2801
	2 5 7	1525	1810	XO9801
	1 3 6	0740	1105	MF8201
	6	0830	1055	MF8901
	4	0740	1135	MF8205
	2 5 7	0735	1055	MF8207
Xi'an — Xiamen	2 4 6	1030	1420	WH2801
	2 5 7	1200	1435	XO9801
	1 3 6	1155	1500	MF8201
	6	1940	2150	MF8901
	4	1230	1600	MF8205
	2 5 7	1145	1500	MF8207

** For reference only.*

Airline codes:

CA = Air China
MU = China Eastern Airlines
XW = China Xinhua Airlines
CZ = China Southern Airlines
SC = Shandong Airlines
2Z = Chang'an Airlines
HU = Hainan Airlines Co Ltd
WH = China Northwest Airlines
3U = Sichuan Airlines
MF = Xiamen Airlines Co Ltd
XO = Xinjiang Airlines

AUGUST

29/7~4/8

To celebrate the 75th anniversary of the founding of the People's Liberation Army, more than 200 paintings and calligraphic works will be on display in a **national exhibition in Nanchang** in Jiangxi Province. All the works were created by veteran generals, officers, soldiers, artists and art lovers from across the country. The People's Liberation Army was founded on August 1, 1927 in Nanchang.

8-12 / 8

During the **Guangzhou international wind music instrument gala**, authorised by the APBDA, a total of 55 wind bands from countries including China, Japan, the Republic of Korea (ROK), Singapore, Germany, Australia and Spain will participate in 24 concerts to be held in Guangzhou during the gala. Guangzhou now has 170 wind bands.

August

More than 100 domestic and overseas fashion design participants will organise joint shows on the eastern side of the famous Tian'anmen Square, Chang'an Avenue, hotels and shopping malls, during the **First Beijing Fashion Week**. Forums and expositions hosted by well-known experts, professionals and entrepreneurs will also be held. The event is jointly organised by the China Garment Group Corporation, Capital Tourism Group Corporation and China Culture and Arts Co., Ltd.

17/8~1/9

The **12th Qingdao Int'l Beer Festival**, taking place in the Qingdao Int'l Beer City, consists of a series of activities, including the grand opening and closing ceremonies, evening shows, parades, cultural performance and, of course, beer sampling. At the same time, there will be an international fair of beverages, food and processing equipment.

TSINGTAO BEER
青島啤酒
TSINGTAO BREWERY
TSINGTAO, CHINA

28-31/8

Hosted by the China Foreign Trade & Economic Cooperation Enterprises Association, the **China Int'l Travel Expo** will be held in Beijing Agricultural Exhibition Centre. The China Travel & Tourism Industry Investment Seminar will become one of the highlights. Representatives from the tourism industry from China and abroad will attend the event.

23-28/8

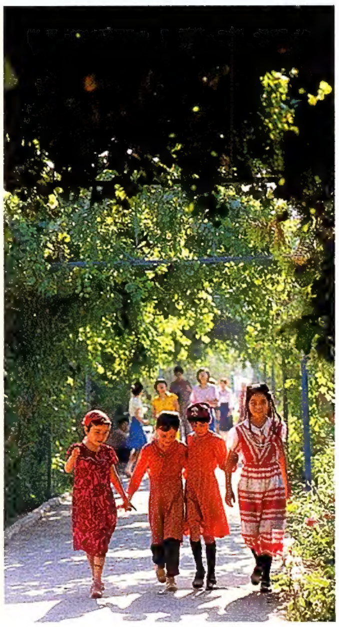
During the **China Changchun Int'l Film Festival**, domestic and foreing movie stars put on performances, Chinese and foreign movies are shown and appraised, and "Changchun Commemorative Cups" are issued. Trade fairs and exhibitions of high-tech products are also held. Guandong lantern and food festivals are arranged and the unique Yangge dance in the northeast is performed.

August

In Lhasa, capital city of the Tibet Autonomous Region, the **Shoton Festival**, is one of the most important events of the Tibetans. Religious pilgrims will have a series of activities to worship the Buddha, such as Sunning the Buddha, performing traditional Tibetan operas and holding various material fairs. The main venue will be the Drepung Monastery. The Shoton Festival is usually held from the end of the sixth month to the early eighth month of the Tibetan calendar.

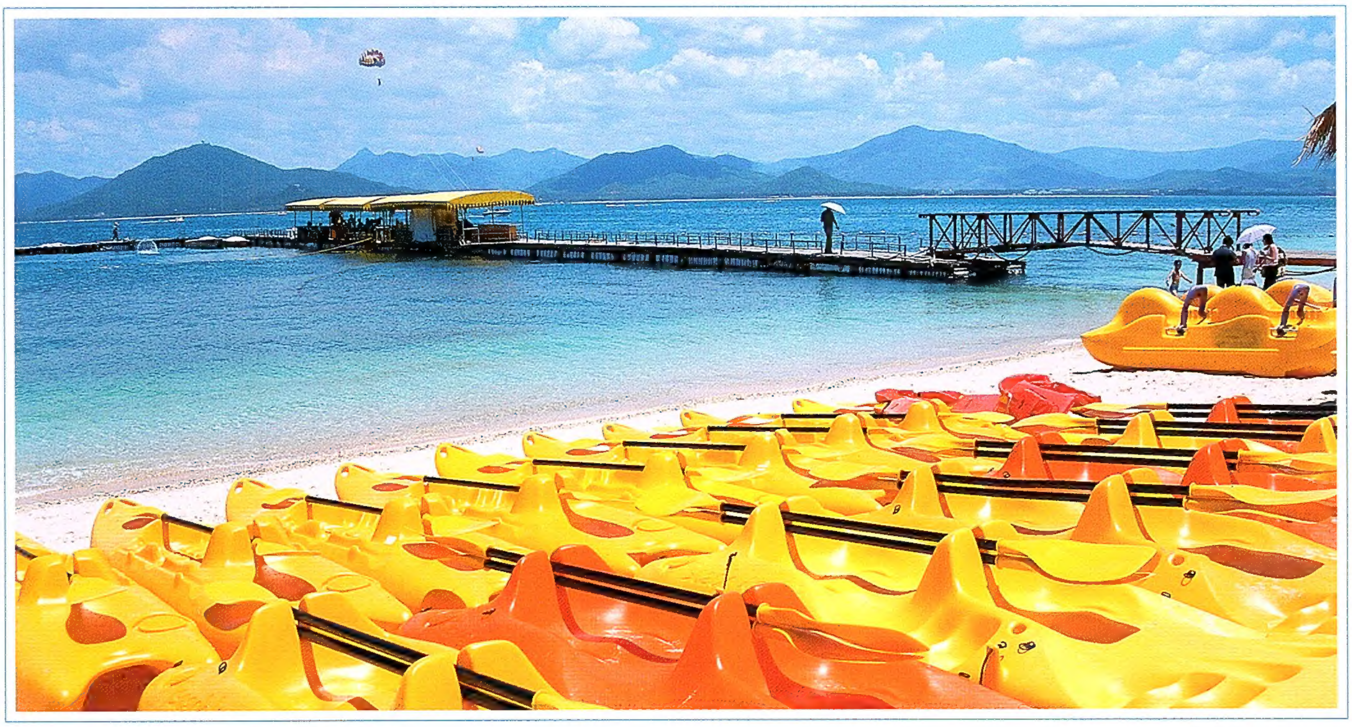
26/6~26/8

Staring from late June, the **First Uygur Travel Festival** held in Urümqi, capital city of Xinjiang, includes plentiful events such as an automobile show, a folklore and travel commodity exhibition, an adventure travel contest and other travel-related activities. Not to be missed, the annual **Grape Festival** will also be held from August 20-26. A hami melon contest and trade fairs will be arranged. Travellers can also taste lots of delicious grapes.



NEXT ISSUE

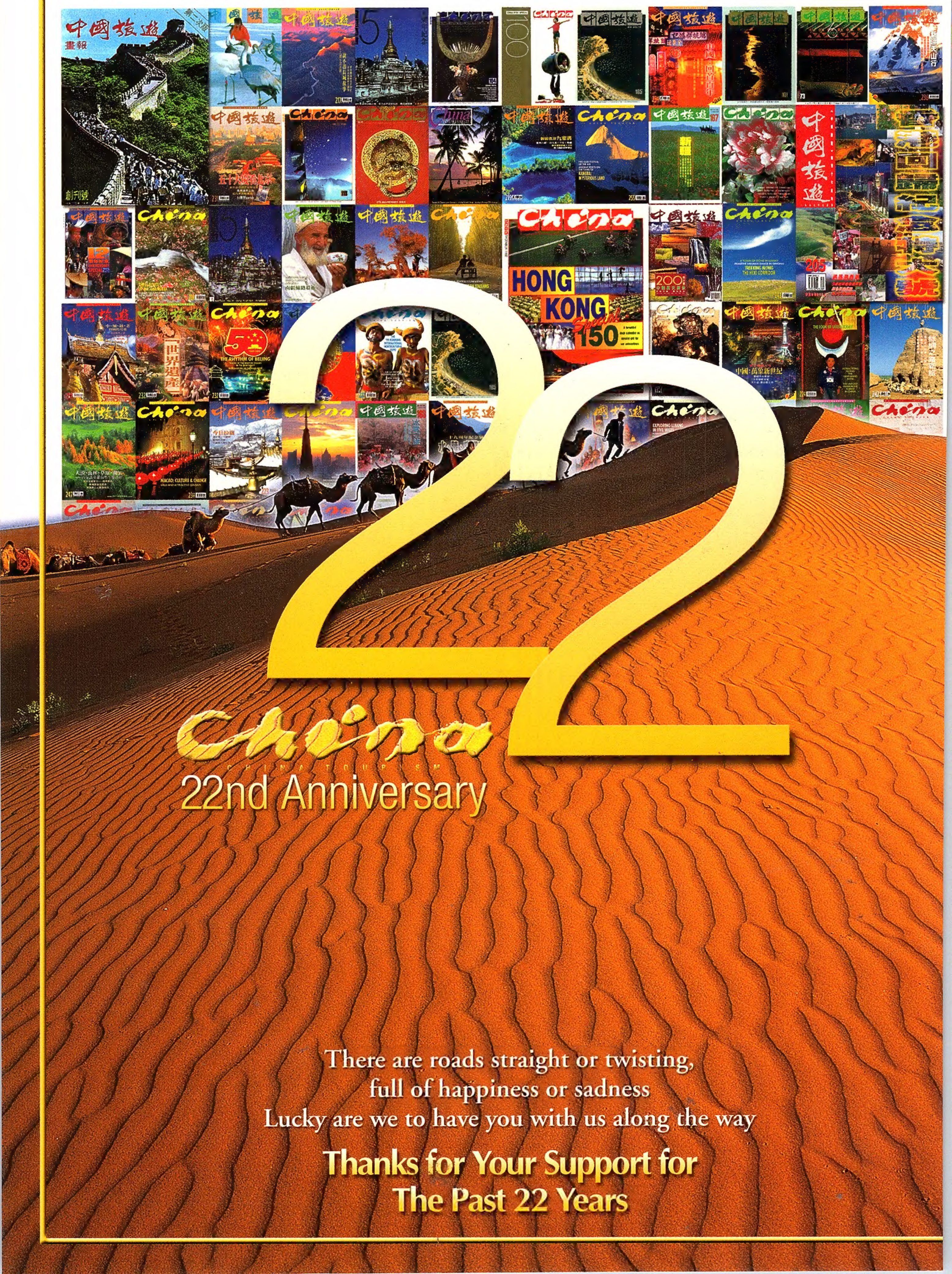
Highlights of Issue No. 266



- A package tour to **Hainan Island** includes flight tickets and staying in hotels. It ensures you will be able to enjoy every kind of pleasure. You can get an unobstructed view of blue skies, white clouds and long beaches in a world-class luxury hotel, and be rejuvenated in the world's largest indoor hot springs, or experience fragrant massages. Or, you can discover even more on a wonderful DIY trip. You must be prepared to chase the bus carrying a heavy knapsack on your back in 35°C heat and high humidity. Like our reporter, you can trek to the vent of a volcano, explore isolated Lecheng Island and old villages, collect crystals in the Tunchang crystal mine, and penetrate a virgin forest. Come and experience the magnificent 10-day excursion to Hainan.

- The Yunnan cities of Dali, Lijiang, Shangri-La (previously called Zhongdian) and Xishuangbanna may be familiar names to tourists. The locals, however, also recommend you visit **Qujing** in eastern Yunnan. The second largest city in Yunnan, Qujing is quiet and clean. Touring opportunities there are unique. It is the source of the Pearl River, and a place having colourful sand carving competition, vast rape flower fields, stunning canyon views and waterfalls. Though the author has been to thousands of similar places, he cannot help but be amazed at the feast for his eyes in Qujing.

- As the capital city, Taipei has always stolen the thunder from **Southern Taiwan**. However, our correspondent made several trips to the island and shows us how the southern part of Taiwan is equally attractive. Arriving at the right time, you will appreciate beautiful lotuses in Chia-i. You can take a tiny train to tour around a tranquil mountain village. You may be astonished by the magnificent customs of Taiwan's domestic nationalities that have a history of more than 6,000 years. Of course, it will be a pity if you miss the delicacies offered in southern Taiwan.


22
China
CHINA TOURISM
22nd Anniversary
There are roads straight or twisting,
full of happiness or sadness
Lucky are we to have you with us along the way
Thanks for Your Support for
The Past 22 Years